

# Prometheus Bound

## CHARACTERS

POWER; his companion FORCE has a mute part

HEPHAESTUS, god of fire and metal-working

PROMETHEUS, a Titan

CHORUS, the daughters of Oceanus whose river surrounds the earth

OCEANUS

IO, daughter of Inachus king of Argos

HERMES, messenger of Zeus

*The play is set beneath a remote and towering ravine in the mountains of the Caucasus, near the sea. POWER and FORCE, accompanying HEPHAESTUS, enter from one side; at ZEUS' order they are bringing PROMETHEUS, who may already be pinioned, to be fettered to the cliff-face.*

POWER. We have come to a far region of the earth, to a tract of Scythia, to a wasteland without human life. Your duty, Hephaestus, is to these instructions which father Zeus laid on you, to harness this malefactor to high, rocky cliffs in the unbreakable fetters of 5 adamantine bonds; for it was the flower of your skill, gleaming fire and all its arts, that he stole and bestowed upon men; and for such a crime he must surely pay penalty to the gods, to be taught acceptance of Zeus' rule, and to stop his habit of favouring 10 mankind.

HEPHAESTUS. Power and Force, for both of you Zeus' order is an end, and there is no further obstacle. I myself lack the hardness, however, to put a god who is my kin forcibly in bonds, in a ravine

beaten by storms; yet it is absolutely necessary for me to be this 15  
hard, because it is a heavy matter to disregard the word of father  
Zeus.

(*addressing Prometheus*) Son of Themis right in her counsel, you  
are over-lofty in your designs! Against your will, and my will too,  
I shall nail you to this mountain uninhabited by men, in forged  
bronze fetters that cannot be undone; here you will know neither 20  
the voice nor the form of any mortal, and be scorched by the sun's  
brilliant flame until you lose your skin's fine colour. You will be  
glad when night's starry cloak hides the light, and when the sun  
scatters the dawn frost again. The burden of your ever-present 25  
agony will wear you down, for the one who is to alleviate it is not  
yet born. Such is your reward for your habit of favouring mankind;  
for as a god you did not cower before the wrath of gods when you  
bestowed privileges upon men beyond what was just. In return for 30  
this you shall keep guard of this unlovely cliff, standing upright and  
unsleeping, with no flexing of your legs; many will be the wails and  
laments you voice, uselessly, for the mind of Zeus is inexorable;  
every ruler new to power is harsh. 35

POWER. (*to Hephaestus*) Now then, why your delay, and pity? They  
are in vain. Why do you not loathe the god who is the gods' worst  
enemy, who betrayed your prerogative to men?

HEPHAESTUS. Kinship is strangely powerful, I tell you, as is com-  
radeship.

POWER. I agree; but how can father Zeus' word be disobeyed? Do 40  
you not fear this more?

HEPHAESTUS. Yes, but you are always ruthless and overbearing.

POWER. This is because there's no remedy in weeping for  
Prometheus here; and you are not to waste effort on what is useless.

HEPHAESTUS. O the worth of my hands! How much I hate you! 45

POWER. Why detest it? I am simply saying, your skill has nothing  
to do with your present task.

HEPHAESTUS. Even so, I wish it had fallen to someone else.

POWER. Everything is a burden except ruling over gods; no one is  
free except Zeus. 50

HEPHAESTUS. I know it by these things here (*pointing to the fet-*  
*ters*); and I cannot deny it.

POWER. Then hurry to put bonds round Prometheus, so that father Zeus does not see you dawdling.

HEPHAESTUS. Look, the fetters are here to see, ready to hand.

POWER. Throw them round his arms then, and hammer them home, striking with powerful might; nail him to the rocks! 55

*(Hephaestus begins fettering Prometheus to the cliff.)*

HEPHAESTUS. The work is under way, you can see, and there's no idling.

POWER. Smash down harder! Tighten them up! Leave no slack at all! He's clever at finding a way out even from impossibilities!

HEPHAESTUS. This arm at least is fixed beyond getting free. 60

POWER. Fasten this one home as well, then, securely, so he learns he's slower than Zeus for all his cleverness.

HEPHAESTUS. No one will rightly find fault with me—except Prometheus!

POWER. Now nail an adamantine wedge's remorseless point right through his chest—strongly, now! 65

HEPHAESTUS. Poor Prometheus, I lament for your ordeal.

POWER. Here you are hesitating again, and lamenting over Zeus' enemies; watch you don't end up pitying yourself!

HEPHAESTUS. Are you seeing a sight hard for eyes to watch?

POWER. I see Prometheus getting what he deserves. Now throw bands round his ribs! 70

HEPHAESTUS. I do this under compulsion; don't give me too many orders!

POWER. On my oath, I'll give you orders, and urge you on loudly too! Move downward, and force bonds round his legs.

HEPHAESTUS. Look, the work is done: no lengthy labour. 75

POWER. Strike the cross-fetters home—use your strength! Our work has an overseer, and a heavy one!

HEPHAESTUS. Your voice's tone matches your appearance!

POWER. Grow soft if you will, but don't throw it back at me that my temper's harsh and obdurate. 80

HEPHAESTUS. Let us go: he has bonds round his limbs. *(he begins to leave)*

POWER. *(addressing Prometheus)* Now do your outrages here, and plunder the gods' prerogatives and attach them to ephemeral

mankind! What part of this ordeal can mortal men make lighter for you? The gods call you Prometheus, but the name is false; for you yourself need foresight to find a way to roll free of skilled handiwork like this! 85

POWER and FORCE follow HEPHAESTUS out by the side; PROMETHEUS is now immobile for the rest of the play.

PROMETHEUS. (*voicing his despair, alternately speaking and chanting*)

O sky divine, and winds swift-winged, and river-springs, and ocean waves' bright laughter beyond counting, and earth the mother of all, and the sun's circle which sees all—I call on you: look upon the kind of suffering I have, a god at the hands of gods! See the kind of torments which are to wear me away, to be my ordeal for the time of numberless years: such is the shameful bondage 95

which the blessed gods' new captain has invented against me! (*in despair*) Oh, I groan with the pain, both present and to come! Where is a limit for my agonies ever to be set? 100

And yet what am I saying? I have accurate foreknowledge of all that is to be, and no pain will come to me unexpectedly. I must bear my destined lot as easily as I can, knowing that the power of fate cannot be fought. Yet I can neither keep silent about my misfortunes nor break my silence; it was for giving prerogatives to men that I am yoked in these harsh constraints, a miserable wretch: I hunted down fire from its source, to steal it in a filled fennel-stalk, and it has proved mankind's teacher in every craft, and their great resource. Such are the wrongdoings for which I pay penalty under the open sky: in bonds; nailed fast! 105 110

*He senses an imminent arrival; he voices his alarm and astonishment. The CHORUS of the daughters of Oceanus begin to enter in winged carriages, still out of his sight.*

What? What's this?

What sound, what scent has winged towards me, invisibly? Is it sped here by god, or come from men, or does it mix these? Has [someone] come to this mountain at the world's end 115

to view my misery—or with what wish, then?  
 See me in bonds, a god ill-fated,  
 the enemy of Zeus, the one who came 120  
 to be hated by all the gods  
 that frequent the courts of Zeus,  
 all because of his too great friendship for men!  
 (*in renewed alarm*) Oh, whatever is the fluttering I hear again  
 close by me of birds?  
 The air is whirring with the light beat of wings. 125  
 All that approaches is fearsome for me.

*The CHORUS sing.*

CHORUS. Have no fear! We come in formation as friends Str. 1  
 to this crag, our wings swift in rivalry,  
 after barely persuading our father's mind; 130  
 rapid winds bore me here as my escort.  
 Echoes from hammered iron had pierced our inmost cave;  
 it struck and shocked me out of my shy reserve;  
 I came unshod; I sped in this wing-borne carriage. 135

PROMETHEUS. (*intoning his despair*) Oh, lament for me!  
 You offspring of Tethys of the many children  
 and daughters of father Oceanus  
 who coils round all the earth with his unsleeping stream, 140  
 look! See in what kind of bond  
 I am fastened in the high crags of this ravine,  
 and must endure as its unenviable guard.

CHORUS. I do see, Prometheus, but a mist of fear Ant. 1  
 rushed over my eyes, filling them with tears 145  
 when I saw your body put to wither here  
 on rock, tortured by adamantine bonds.  
 New masters are ruling and guide Olympus' helm;  
 fresh laws too without due base are Zeus' power; 150  
 what was mighty before, he now obliterates.

PROMETHEUS. If only he had sent me below the earth,  
 and down where Hades receives the dead  
 into boundless Tartarus,

and savagely confined me in unbreakable bonds, 155  
 so that no god or any other would be rejoicing over me here!  
 Now, high up in the air, a thing shaken and battered,  
 a miserable wretch, I suffer for my enemies' delight.

CHORUS. Who among gods is so hard of heart Str. 2  
 as to find delight in this? 161  
 Who does not share resentment  
 at your misery, except of course Zeus?  
 Always rancorous and unbending  
 in purpose he subdues the race  
 of Ouranos, and will not cease 165  
 before either he sates his heart or someone  
 by some ruse gains the rule that is hard to attain.

PROMETHEUS. I swear: the blessed ones' president will yet have  
 need of me,  
 tortured though I am in strong fetters round my limbs,  
 to reveal the new plan through which 170  
 he is to be despoiled of his sceptre and prerogatives.  
 He will not charm me at all with honey-tongued spells  
 of persuasion, anymore than I will ever cower  
 beneath harsh threats and give this information away,  
 before he looses me from cruel bonds 175  
 and is willing to pay penalty for this torture.

CHORUS. You are too headstrong and yield not at all Ant. 2  
 in your bitter agonies;  
 your mouth is too free in speech. 180  
 My mind, however, is pierced by sharp fear;  
 my dread is for you and what happens—  
 wherever it will be your fate  
 to come ashore and see the end  
 of this pain; for Cronus' son has a nature  
 beyond reach, and a quite inexorable heart. 185

PROMETHEUS. I know that he is harsh and keeps justice to him-  
 self.  
 Still, I think he will one day soften in temper,

when he is smashed in this way.

Once he has calmed his obdurate anger 190

he will one day enter a bond of friendship with me,

eager joining with eager.

CHORUS. (*speaking*) Reveal the whole story, and tell us on what  
kind of charge Zeus has taken and tortures you so ignominiously  
and harshly. Inform us, unless you are hurt in some way by speak- 195  
ing.

PROMETHEUS. Yes, even to speak of these things is painful, but  
silence too gives me pain; in every way they are a cruel fate.

As soon as the divine powers became angry, and faction stirred  
between them all, with some wishing to throw Cronus from his seat 200  
so that Zeus, of course, might be lord, while others were eager for  
the opposite, that Zeus should never rule the gods—then despite  
my best advice I was unable to dissuade the Titans, children of  
Heaven and Earth: scorning crafty means, they thought in their 205  
arrogant might that they would effortlessly become the masters by  
violence; but I had been given prophecy, and more than once, by  
my mother Themis and Earth, one form with many names, how the 210  
future would be fulfilled: that those who came out superior must  
prevail not by strength or violence, but by cunning. Although I  
told them this and set it out fully, they did not deign even to glance  
at it. Quite the best of the courses then to hand seemed to be to 215  
join my mother to me in a willing stand to aid a willing Zeus; and  
through my counsels the hidden black depths of Tartarus conceal  
the ancient-born Cronus and all his allies. Although the tyrant of 220  
the gods received such help from me, he has answered me with this  
evil reward. In tyranny there is somehow this vice, not to trust one's  
friends. 225

Well, as to your question, then, on what charge he tortures me,  
this I shall make clear. So soon as he was seated on his father's  
throne, he at once assigned various prerogatives to deities and dis- 230  
tributed command; but of wretched mortals he took no account,  
instead he desired to obliterate their whole race and to generate  
another from new. In this he had no opposition except mine; but I  
was daring: I set men free from being smashed into destruction and 235  
going to Hades. That is why, I tell you, I am bent in these agonies,

as painful to suffer as they are pitiable to see. After being readier with pity for mortals I was not myself held worthy of getting it, but have been brought ruthlessly into line like this, a sight to bring Zeus infamy. 240

CHORUS. Anyone who does not share resentment at your ordeals, Prometheus, has a heart of iron indeed, and is made of stone. I would not have wished to look upon this myself, and now that I have looked, I am hurt to the core. 245

PROMETHEUS. Yes, I truly am pitiable for friends to look at.

CHORUS. You didn't perhaps go even further than you said?

PROMETHEUS. I did; I stopped men from foreseeing their death.

CHORUS. What sort of remedy did you find for this affliction?

PROMETHEUS. I gave blind hopes a home within them. 250

CHORUS. This was a great benefit you gave men!

PROMETHEUS. In addition, however, I bestowed fire on them.

CHORUS. And now ephemeral men possess fire's bright flame?

PROMETHEUS. They do, and from it they will learn many crafts.

CHORUS. Those were the charges against you, I suppose, upon which Zeus... 255

PROMETHEUS. ...tortures me, yes, and in no way relents from the evil he does me.

CHORUS. And is no end set for your ordeal?

PROMETHEUS. No, none, except when Zeus himself decides.

CHORUS. And he will decide—how? What hope is there? Do you not see that you did wrong? But that you did do wrong, I have no pleasure myself in saying, while you have the pain. Let us drop this, however; and you seek some means to be freed from your ordeal! 260

PROMETHEUS. A light thing for someone with his feet out of harm's way, to urge and advise the one in trouble! Everything of this I knew: I did wrong willingly, willingly, I will not deny; and in helping mortals I found misery myself. I swear, I did not think at all that punishments like these would have me withering away on lofty crags, and getting this desolate, lonely mountain. Please, do not weep for the sufferings I have here, but step down and hear what things are on their way to happening, so you learn the whole tale through to its end. Let me persuade you, please, let me persuade you: share the troubles of one now struggling to endure 265 270



this, for misery wanders around and settles now upon one person, 275  
now upon another.

*The CHORUS dismount from their winged carriages, chanting.*

CHORUS. We were not unwilling to have you urge this on us,  
Prometheus;  
and now with light step I shall leave  
the seat in which I sped rapidly,  
and the sacred heaven, passage-way of birds, 280  
and set foot on this jagged land.  
I desire to hear your miseries all through.

*There is a sudden entry: OCEANUS appears, riding upon a griffin; he is chanting.*

OCEANUS. I come to you, Prometheus,  
and reach a long journey's end, 285  
directing this swift-winged bird  
by thought, without bridle;  
know that I share the pain of your misfortunes!  
Kinship, I think, compels me forward in this way, 290  
and apart from kin there is no one  
I should give greater due than you.  
You will learn that this is true; and it is not in me  
to speak empty compliments.  
So, come: indicate what I should do to help you; 295  
you shall never say, you have a friend  
more sure than Oceanus!

PROMETHEUS. What? What's this? You too have come, of course,  
to view my miseries? How did you brave leaving the stream named  
for you and its rock-roofed, natural caverns to come to the land 300  
that mothers iron? Have you come to observe my misfortunes and  
share resentment at my troubles? Look at the sight: here is the  
friend of Zeus, the one who helped establish his rule—see what 305  
pains I am bent in by him!

OCEANUS. I do see, Prometheus; and, yes, I do wish to give you the  
best advice, however ingenious you are. Learn to know yourself!  
Modify your ways for new ones: there is also a new ruler among

the gods. If you go on in this way hurling out harsh words sharp 310  
 with anger, Zeus might perhaps hear you, though he is seated far  
 off and higher; and then the mass of your present ordeals would  
 seem child's play. No, you poor wretch: let go of the angry passions  
 you have, and seek release from this disaster. Perhaps I seem to you 315  
 old-fashioned in what I say; but the truth is, your state like this,  
 Prometheus, is the wages of a tongue too lofty in its speech. Aren't  
 you humble yet, and don't you yet yield to your troubles?—and do 320  
 you wish to add others to your present ones? Use me as teacher,  
 and you won't kick against the pricks, when you see a monarch in  
 power who is harsh and not answerable.

And now I will go and try if I can to free you from this ordeal; 325  
 and you stay quiet, and don't speak too violently! Or don't you  
 know definitely, with your extreme intelligence, that punishment  
 is inflicted upon a wild tongue?

PROMETHEUS. I envy you for escaping blame when you have 330  
 shared everything courageously with me. And now let be, and don't  
 concern yourself: you will absolutely not persuade Zeus; he is not  
 easily persuaded. Rather, keep looking out for yourself, so that you  
 don't get hurt through your journey.

OCEANUS. You are much better at advising those close to you than 335  
 your own self! Facts, not words, are my evidence. Now I am eager,  
 don't pull me back; I am confident, yes, confident, that Zeus will  
 give me this gift, your release from this ordeal.

PROMETHEUS. In part I commend you, and will never stop doing 340  
 so, for you're not lacking in eager concern. Make no effort, how-  
 ever: your efforts for me will be wasted, and no help, even though  
 you wish to make some effort. No, stay quiet, and keep yourself  
 out of the way; for even in my misfortune, I would wish it to harm 345  
 as few as possible. Very much that, since what happened to my  
 brother Atlas oppresses me: he stands in western parts supporting  
 on his shoulders earth's and heaven's pillar, a burden not easy  
 for the arms. That child of earth too, the inhabitant of Cilician 350  
 caves, hostile, monstrous, with a hundred heads—I saw and pitied  
 him as he was violently overcome—Typhon furious for war, who  
 stood against all the gods, hissing terror with dreadful jaws, and 355  
 who flashed a fierce gleam from his eyes, intent on the violent  
 ruin of tyranny. Zeus' unsleeping bolt came to him, however, the

lightning which descends in a blast of flame; it hit him out of  
 his lofty boastings; he was struck to the very soul of his being, 360  
 blazing like a coal, and his strength blasted from him in thunder.  
 Useless now and sprawled flat, his body lies near the sea-narrows,  
 crushed beneath the roots of Etna; and seated on its topmost peak 365  
 Hephaestus has his glowing smithy, from which rivers of fire will  
 one day erupt to devour the broad fields of fertile Sicily with savage  
 jaws: such is the anger Typhon will send boiling upward in red-hot 370  
 bolts of blasting fire, a storm none may approach, although he is  
 burnt to embers by Zeus' lightning.

But you are not without experience, nor do you need me as  
 teacher: save yourself as you know how, while I shall endure my  
 present fortune to the dregs, until Zeus' mind relents from anger. 375  
 OCEANUS. Surely you know, Prometheus, that words are doctors  
 for a sick temper?

PROMETHEUS. Yes, if one softens a heart at the right moment and  
 does not forcibly reduce swollen passions. 380

OCEANUS. But what loss do you see in eager intention and bold-  
 ness? Tell me.

PROMETHEUS. Wasted effort and simple-minded foolishness.

OCEANUS. Allow me to be sick with this weakness, for most profit  
 lies in a man of good sense seeming not to be sensible. 385

PROMETHEUS. This fault will seem to be mine.

OCEANUS. Your words are for sending me back home again,  
 clearly.

PROMETHEUS. Yes, in case your laments for me bring you enmity.

OCEANUS. You mean from the one newly seated on the all-  
 powerful throne?

PROMETHEUS. Guard against his heart ever becoming aggrieved. 390

OCEANUS. Your disaster is my teacher, Prometheus!

PROMETHEUS. Be on your way, take yourself off, keep to your  
 present mind!

OCEANUS. Your words urge me on when I am already start-  
 ing; my bird-like steed is brushing heaven's wide path with its  
 wings. It would clearly be glad to rest its limbs in its home 395  
 stable.

OCEANUS *leaves on his griffin. The CHORUS sing and dance.*

CHORUS. I lament you, Prometheus, in your evil fate; tears are dripping from my tender eyes; I let them pour out, streaming and soaking my cheek in their wet flow. This is how Zeus rules unsparingly, with private laws, and displaying the arrogant power of his spear to those former gods.	Str. 1          400       405
The whole earth has already cried out its lament. Men lament for your magnificence and rank, ancient in splendour ( <i>text missing</i> ), and that of your blood-kin; and all mortal men inhabiting homes settled here in sacred Asia, share the hurt and pain you bear, to their great lament;	Ant. 1          410
the inhabitants of Colchis as well, those maidens fearless in battle; and Scythia's hordes who occupy the furthest place on earth around Maeotis' lake;	Str. 2       416
and Arabia's flower, its warriors, those who inhabit a city on high sheer cliffs near Caucasus, a fighting host who roar amid sharp-pointed spears.	Ant. 2       421
Only one other Titan before did I see in such ordeals, subdued by the outrage of untiring bonds—a god!— Atlas, pre-eminent in the power of his strength, [who] supports [earth] and heaven with its sky on his back like a covering roof.	Str. 3       426       430
( <i>a line missing</i> ) and ocean's wave cries out ( <i>words missing</i> ) as it falls, its depths lament,	Ant. 3

while Hades' black recess in the earth is roaring  
below, and river-springs in sacred flow  
are lamenting your piteous pain.

435

PROMETHEUS. Don't think—no, don't!—that I keep silent through pride or obduracy; but painful awareness gnaws my heart when I see myself treated so contemptuously. Yet who else but myself completely determined their prerogatives for these new gods? I keep silent on that, however, for I would be telling you 440 when you already know. Hear rather the miseries of mortal men—how I made them intelligent when before they were silly, and gave them wits to use. I will tell you without any blame for mankind, 445 but explain the goodwill in what I have given them. At first they had sight but saw to no effect, had hearing but did not hear, confusing everything randomly like dream-shapes for the length of their life; and they knew neither brick-built houses catching the 450 sun, nor carpentry, but dug out underground homes like scurrying ants in sunless, tunnelled caves. They had no sure mark for either winter's coming, or that of flowery spring and fruitful summer, 455 but did everything without design until, that is, I showed them the risings and settings of the stars, so hard to determine. Number too, supreme among skills, I invented for them, and letters in combination, the record of all things, the mother and crafter 460 of poetry. I was first too in yoking and harnessing beasts, to be subservient to yoke-loops and saddles, and to take over from men their greatest exertions; and I brought horses to accept the reins beneath a chariot, that ornament of extreme wealth's luxury. Next, 465 no one else but myself invented ships to carry sailors, roaming the sea on wings of linen-cloth. Although I had invented, wretch that I am, such clever means for men, I have myself no stratagem to free 470 me from the torment I have now.

CHORUS. You have suffered a shameful outrage; your wits have been taken away, and you wander, and like some bad doctor you have fallen ill and lost your spirit, and you cannot discover the kinds of medicine to cure yourself. 475

PROMETHEUS. When you hear the rest from me you will be more amazed at what skills and means I devised. The greatest of them: if any man fell ill, there was nothing in defence, either to eat

or rub in, or yet to drink, but men were wasting away for lack  
 of medicines until the time I showed them the mixing of gen- 480  
 tle remedies with which they drive away all sickness. Also, I set  
 out in order many ways of divination. I was the first to judge  
 from dreams what must be reality; I explained for them difficult 485  
 omens from people's remarks, and signs met on their journeys;  
 I precisely defined the flight of birds of prey both favourable  
 and sinister in nature, the habits of life they each have, and the 490  
 enmities and affections between one another, and their perch-  
 ings together; the smoothness of entrails too, and what colour  
 the gall-bladder would have when marking the gods' pleasure,  
 and the mottling of a well-shaped liver; I had men burn the 495  
 thigh-bones and long spine wrapped in fat, and I put them on  
 their way into the difficult skill of marking the signs, and gave  
 them clear sight from flames of indications which were previously  
 obscure.

So much for things of that kind; but the benefits for men hidden 500  
 below the earth, from bronze, iron, silver and gold—who will say  
 he discovered them before myself? No one, I am sure, unless he  
 wishes to talk empty nonsense.

To put everything briefly together: you should understand that 505  
 men have all their skills from Prometheus!

CHORUS. Don't then help men unduly but neglect yourself in your  
 misfortune; for I have good hopes that you will yet be freed from  
 these bonds and be no less strong than Zeus. 510

PROMETHEUS. Fate who brings all to fulfilment is not yet destined  
 to accomplish that this way; but I am to escape my bonds while  
 bent like this by countless agonies and pains. Skill is weaker by far  
 than the inevitable!

CHORUS. So who is at the helm of the inevitable? 515

PROMETHEUS. The Fates and the ever-mindful Furies, three in  
 form.

CHORUS. Is Zeus then weaker than they?

PROMETHEUS. He'll not escape what is destined, certainly!

CHORUS. Why, what is destined for Zeus except to rule for  
 ever?

PROMETHEUS. You'll learn nothing further of this; and don't  
 entreat me. 520

CHORUS. It must be some holy secret you are keeping close, I suppose.

PROMETHEUS. Mention another subject; it is not at all the moment to speak of this one, rather it must be concealed as much as possible; for it is by keeping it safe that I am to escape my shameful bonds and torments. 525

*The CHORUS sing and dance.*

CHORUS. May he who directs all things, Zeus, Str. 1  
 never set his power to oppose my thinking,  
 nor I ever cease to approach  
 the gods at the sacred feasts 530  
 where oxen are killed near my father Oceanus' unquenchable  
 stream,  
 nor I ever sin in the words I say;  
 and I wish this remains firm for me,  
 and never melts away. 535

It is sweet to draw out one's life Ant. 1  
 to its length in confident hopes, and nourish  
 one's spirit in bright cheerfulness;  
 but I shudder to see you 540  
 worn away and reduced by agonies without number (*words missing*).  
 With no fear of Zeus in your own thinking,  
 the regard you have for mortal men,  
 Prometheus, is too high.

Come, my friend, say: how can they return your favour Str. 2  
 with favour? Where is there help to save you? 546  
 What aid can there be from ephemeral men?  
 And did you not see the feeble weakness to act,  
 dream-like, with which the race of men  
 has been hampered in their blindness? Never (*word missing*) 550  
 will the plans of men  
 elude the ordered government of Zeus.

I came to this understanding when my eyes saw Ant. 2  
 the evil of your fate here, Prometheus.  
 This song that wings to me is quite different 555

from that when I raised the wedding-hymn beside bath  
and bed to honour your marriage,  
when you led in our half-sister Hesione  
with the wedding-gifts,  
persuading her to share your bed as wife. 560

IO enters abruptly from one side, in a headlong rush; her head is horned like a cow. She chants and sings excitedly.

IO. What land? What people? Whom do I see, should I say,  
storm-beaten here in bonds of stone?  
For what crime are you put to death as punishment?  
Tell me where on the earth I have come to in the wandering I  
endure.

(suddenly crying out in frenzied pain) 565

I am stung again, in this misery, by some gadfly—  
keep it away! Oh, away!—  
as I see that cowherd with the countless eyes:  
he moves with cunning in his look;  
even in death the earth does not cover him, 570  
but in hunting me down in this misery,  
he has passed from the dead below, and he has sent me wandering  
in hunger over the sand by the sea,

while his wax-bound reed-pipe noisily drones                      Str.  
its music, to destroy my sleep.                                         575

Oh, how I suffer! Where are my far wanderings  
leading me to, [these] wanderings?  
What, O son of Cronus, whatever did you find  
that I had done wrong, to yoke me under these torments,  
(*crying out in distress*)

and exhaust and derange me so, 580  
abject from the gadfly's driving terror?

Burn me with fire, or bury me in earth, or give me  
to sea-creatures to devour; do not grudge me  
my prayers to you, my lord.

I am well-wearied enough by my many, many wanderings, 585  
nor can I learn in what way I am to escape



my torment. Do you hear  
the voice of this maiden who is horned like a cow?

PROMETHEUS. (*speaking*) This must be Inachus' daughter that I  
hear, the maiden harried along by the gadfly—who kindled Zeus'  
heart with love, and now through Hera's loathing is forced past 590  
weariness on her overlong course!

IO. How can you know to speak my father's name? Ant.  
Tell me in my agony here!  
Who are you, who then, you poor wretch, to address me 595  
so surely in my wretchedness,  
and name the affliction launched upon me by god  
which wastes me away, and goads me to wander madly?  
(*crying out in distress*)  
In the tortures of wild bucking  
and hunger, I have come with headlong speed; 600  
I am victim of a rancorous scheme [of Hera].  
Some unfortunates there are, who—Oh, alas!—  
endure a fate like mine.  
But now tell me clearly, please, what suffering still remains for me! 605  
What means to a cure is there for my affliction?  
Reveal it, if you know!  
Do speak; tell this maiden put to cruel wandering!

PROMETHEUS. I shall tell you clearly all you wish to learn, without  
riddles woven in, but with plain words, as is right when open- 610  
ing one's lips to friends. You see the giver of fire to mankind—  
Prometheus.

IO. O you who appeared as mankind's common benefactor! O  
wretched Prometheus, why are you suffering this punishment?

PROMETHEUS. I have only just stopped mourning my troubles. 615

IO. So will you not make me this gift?

PROMETHEUS. Say what gift you seek; you may learn everything  
from me.

IO. Tell me who harnessed you fast in the ravine.

PROMETHEUS. The plan was that of Zeus, and the hand that of  
Hephaestus.

IO. And the penalty you pay—what was your crime? 620

PROMETHEUS. I do enough in making only this much plain to you.

IO. Well, also reveal the end of my wandering to me, and how long the time of my misery will be.

PROMETHEUS. It is better for you not to learn than to learn this.

IO. Don't, please, hide from me what I am about to suffer. 625

PROMETHEUS. Well, I don't begrudge you this gift.

IO. Then why delay telling me everything?

PROMETHEUS. I've no grudge, but I hesitate to put your mind in turmoil.

IO. Have no further worry for me. This will please me.

PROMETHEUS. Since you are eager, I should speak. Listen, then. 630

CHORUS. (*breaking in*) No, not yet! Let me share in the pleasure too! Let us inquire first into her affliction, with herself telling of her long, cruel misfortunes. As to what remains of her ordeal, let her learn that from you.

PROMETHEUS. It's your job, Io, to gratify them, above all as your father's sisters; it's worth taking time to weep and grieve fully for misfortunes, here in this place, where one is bound to earn tears from one's listeners. 636

IO. I do not know how to refuse you all; and with a clear tale you will find out all you desire—and yet I weep even to speak about the storm launched upon me by god, and the reason why the ruin which I now endure swept suddenly over my form. 640

Visions in the night came constantly into my maiden's chambers and kept blandishing me with smooth words: 'Girl, you are greatly blessed by heaven! Why so long a maiden, when you may have the greatest of unions? Zeus has been inflamed by a shaft of desire, and wishes to make love with you. Child, it is not for you to spurn Zeus' bed! No, go out into Lerna's deep meadow, to your father's herds and ox-stalls, and relieve Zeus' eyes of their desire.' Such dreams held me fast in misery every night, until, that is, I had the courage to tell my father of these dreams which appeared in the night; and he sent frequent sacred envoys to Pytho and as far as Dodona, to learn what he should do or say to please the gods. They kept coming to report oracles that had shifting voices, spoke obscurely, and were hard to determine; but finally a clear response came to Inachus with definite instructions in its wording, to thrust me outside my 645 650 655 660

home and fatherland, to be let loose to wander over earth's furthest 665  
 boundaries; and should he not be willing, fiery lightning would  
 come from Zeus to obliterate his whole line. Persuaded by such  
 prophecies from Loxias he drove and shut me out of the house, 670  
 against my will, and his will too; but Zeus' curb compelled him to  
 do this forcibly. Straightaway my form and wits were sent awry;  
 I was given horns, as you see; and I was stung by the fly's sharp  
 bite and rushed maddened and bucking to Cerchne's flow of good 675  
 water and Lerna's spring. A cowherd born from the earth, all raw  
 anger, accompanied me along my tracks, Argos, watching me from  
 his clustered eyes. Unexpectedly a sudden death deprived him of 680  
 life, but stung by the gadfly I have been driven by a god's scourge  
 from land to land.

You hear what was done to me. If you can say what remains of  
 my ordeal, tell me; but don't warm my heart with false words out  
 of pity; for I say that made-up tales are the most shameful vice. 685

CHORUS. (*singing their extreme alarm*) No! Stop!

Never, never did I expect  
 such strange tales to come to my hearing,  
 nor such violent, fearful outrages, 690  
 so hard to watch and hard to bear,  
 to strike and pierce my heart with doubled sharpness.  
 Oh, what a fate, what a fate!  
 I shudder to see what has been done to Io. 695

PROMETHEUS. (*to the CHORUS*) You are too early with your  
 lament, and with the fear which fills you. Hold back until you learn  
 the rest as well.

CHORUS. Say, tell it all; it pleases those afflicted to have clear fore-  
 knowledge of their future pain!

PROMETHEUS. (*to the CHORUS*) Your first request you gained  
 from me easily; for your first desire was to learn Io's own account 700  
 of her ordeal. Now hear what further suffering this young woman  
 must endure at Hera's hands. (*to IO*) And you, Inachus' child, take  
 my words to heart, to learn the end of your road. 705

First: turn yourself from here towards the sun's rising and make  
 your way to unploughed lands: you will come to the nomadic

Scythians, who live in woven shelters raised high on easy-wheeling carts, and are armed with far-shooting bows: do not approach them, but cross their land and as you go keep close to the rocky shores loud with the sea. On your left hand live the Chalybes, workers with iron: you should guard against them, for they are uncivilized and not for strangers to approach. You will come to the river Hybristes—not falsely named! Do not go over it, for it has no good way across, before you reach the Caucasus itself, looking for its highest point, where the river bursts out in force from the very peaks; you must pass over these summits that neighbour the stars, and go a southerly way, where you will come to the Amazons' host with their loathing for men, who will one day inhabit Themiscyra near Thermodon, where Salmydessus makes a rugged jaw into the sea, inhospitable to sailors, a stepmother evil to ships. These Amazons will guide your way, and very gladly. You will come to the Cimmerian isthmus, at the very gates where the lake makes a narrow passage; you must leave it and cross the Maeotic basin boldly; and there will be a great tale for ever among mankind of your journey, and the Bosphorus will be called after your name. After leaving Europe's soil you will come to mainland Asia.

(*to the CHORUS*) Do you not think the tyrant of the gods is equally violent in everything? Although he was a god who desired union with this mortal woman he weighed these wanderings down on her! (*to IO*) A cruel suitor you found for your bed, young maiden! For you must think of the account you have just heard as not yet even a prelude.

IO. (*suddenly terrified*) Oh! Why me, me? No!

PROMETHEUS. Here you are crying out and moaning loudly: what in the world will you do when you learn the rest of your troubles?

CHORUS. Why, is there something left of her miseries that you will tell her?

PROMETHEUS. Yes, a cruel and stormy sea of consuming torment.

IO. What use for me to live then?—and why not quickly throw myself from this hard cliff, to plunge to the ground and be rid of my whole ordeal? It is better to die once and for all than to suffer miserably every day.

PROMETHEUS. You'd not easily bear what I endure, when it is not my destiny to die! That would rid me of my torments; but now

there is no end set for my agonies until Zeus is thrown from his  
tyranny. 755

IO. Why—is it possible for Zeus to be thrown from his rule?

PROMETHEUS. You'd be pleased, I think, to see this disaster for  
him.

IO. Of course I would, as one who suffers miserably through Zeus!

PROMETHEUS. Well, since these are the facts, you may rejoice. 760

IO. What will rob him of his tyrant's sceptre?

PROMETHEUS. His very own empty-headed designs.

IO. In what way? Tell me, if there's no harm in it.

PROMETHEUS. He will make such a marriage as he'll one day  
regret.

IO. One among gods, or to a mortal? If it may be spoken, say. 765

PROMETHEUS. Why ask which? This may not be spoken aloud.

IO. Is he to be deposed from his throne by the wife?

PROMETHEUS. Yes, one who will bear a son mightier than his  
father.

IO. And is there no averting this outcome for him?

PROMETHEUS. Indeed not, unless it should be through my own  
release from bonds. 770

IO. So who is to release you if Zeus is unwilling?

PROMETHEUS. It is fated to be one of your descendants.

IO. How do you mean? Will a son of mine deliver you from this evil?

PROMETHEUS. Yes, one born from the third generation after ten  
others.

IO. This prophecy is becoming hard for me to understand. 775

PROMETHEUS. Then do not seek to learn your own ordeal either.

IO. Do not offer me an advantage and then deprive me of it!

PROMETHEUS. I will reward you with one or other of two  
accounts.

IO. Two? What kind are they? Reveal them first, and give the choice  
to me.

PROMETHEUS. I give it you, so choose: I shall tell you clearly either  
your remaining miseries, or who is to set me free. 780

CHORUS. (*again intervening*) Please agree to favour her with one  
of those, and myself with the other; and don't think me unworthy  
to be told. Tell the rest of her wanderings to her, and tell *me*, who  
is to set you free. 785

PROMETHEUS. Since you are both eager, I shall not resist telling you all you desire. You first, Io: I shall tell you your wanderings, and your constant harrying; write them in your mind's tablets of memory.

Once you cross the flow bounding the continents, make your way beside the roaring sea towards the sun's fiery rising until you reach the Gorgon plains of Cisthene where the Phorcides dwell, three long-lived maidens with hair white as swans, possessing one shared eye and a single tooth; neither sun nor moon by night ever looks on them with its rays. Nearby are their three winged sisters, the snake-haired Gorgons hated by men; no one who sees them will keep hold of life's breath. Such is the garrison of this place, I tell you! Now hear of a further barely tolerable sight: be on your guard against the sharp-beaked, unbarking hounds of Zeus, the griffins, and the host of one-eyed Arimaspians horse-riders who live around the stream and golden flow of Pluto's river: do not approach these! You will come to a distant land, a black race which dwells near the sunlight's source; the river Ethiops is here. Make your way along its banks until you come to the cataract where the Nile discharges its revered, pure flow from the Byblin mountains; the river will guide you to the three-cornered Nilotic land—and this is where it is your destiny, Io, and your children's, to establish your far-distant colony.

If any of this is said indistinctly and is hard to comprehend, go doubling back again and ask for clearer knowledge; I have more leisure than I wish.

CHORUS. If you have anything left to tell her, or that has been omitted, of her long, cruel wandering, say it; but if you have said everything, then grant us in our turn that favour we were asking; you remember it, of course.

PROMETHEUS. She has heard the end of her journey, all of it; but so she knows that she has not been listening to me in vain, I shall tell what she has endured before she came here, giving this in itself as proof of my words.

(to IO) I shall leave out the great mass of the account, and go to the very end of your wanderings. Now, when you came to the Molossian regions and Dodona on its steep ridge, where the oracles and seat of Thesprotian Zeus are, and a marvel beyond belief, the speaking oak-trees, by which you were told in full clarity, and with

no riddling, that you were to be the glorious partner of Zeus—does  
 anything in this win me your belief? Next in your gadfly-frenzy you  
 rushed along the coastal path to the great gulf of Rhea, from which  
 you have wandered back again on your stormy course; in future  
 time this sea's deep inlet—know this clearly!—will be called Ionian,  
 a memorial for all men of your journey. These are proofs for you,  
 of how my mind sees rather more than has appeared openly.

The rest I shall tell you and Io jointly, and return to the same  
 track as my earlier words. There is a city Canopus, the earth's  
 most distant, by the Nile's very mouth and banked-up silt. Here  
 it is that Zeus will restore your senses merely with the touch of  
 a calming hand; you will bear dark-skinned Epaphus, named for  
 this begetting by Zeus, who will harvest all the land which the  
 Nile waters with its broad flow. The fifth generation from him,  
 one of fifty children, will come back to Argos unwillingly: they  
 will be women, in flight from kindred marriage to their cousins.  
 These, their minds excited by passion, hawks closely in pursuit of  
 doves, will come hunting marriages not for hunting; but the god  
 will deny them possession of the women bodily. Pelasgus' land will  
 accept (*words missing*) when (*words missing*) are killed in a war of  
 murderous women boldly alert in the night; for each wife will take  
 the life of her husband, dipping a two-edged sword in slaughtered  
 blood. I wish Aphrodite might come against my enemies like that!  
 Yet one of the daughters will be bewitched by desire against killing  
 her husband; instead she will have her resolve blunted: of the two  
 choices, she will prefer to be called a coward rather than a mur-  
 derer. It is she who will bear a royal line in Argos. It needs a long  
 account to relate this clearly, but from this seedbed will be born  
 one bold and famous with his bow; it is he who will set me free  
 from these miseries. Such was the oracle my ancient-born mother  
 recounted to me, the Titan Themis; but how, and by what means—  
 to tell this needs a lengthy account, and you will gain nothing from  
 learning it.

*IO bursts suddenly into frenzy again; she starts to leave.*

IO. (*chanting*) Onward! Onward!

Spasms and madness battering my senses inflame me again,  
 and the gadfly's fiery spear-point pierces me.

My heart is kicking inside me with fear,  
 my eyes roll and spin dizzily,  
 and I am carried off-course by a furious blast of frenzy.  
 I am powerless over my tongue; my words strike randomly in thick  
     confusion 885  
 against the waves of a hateful ruin.

*IO rushes away; the CHORUS sing and dance.*

CHORUS. Wise indeed, yes, wise, was he Str.  
 who first pondered the thought in his mind,  
 and whose tongue said it in words,  
 that marriage within one's own kind is far superior; 890  
 and no poor artisan should desire  
 union with those either made effete by wealth  
 or vaunting themselves greatly on their descent.

Never, never, O you Fates, Ant.  
 (*text missing*) may you see me 895  
 as bedmate of Zeus' couch,  
 nor may I come as bride near any groom from Heaven;  
 for I begin to fear now I see  
 the maiden Io hating her husband, consumed  
 in cruel wandering, her ordeal from Hera. 900

For me, when marriage is with an equal, it has no terror, Epode  
 and I do not fear; but I wish the inescapable eye  
 of the mighty gods may not look towards me.  
 That is war beyond warring with, what it deals beyond dealing  
     with!  
 I cannot know what would become of me, 905  
 for I do not see how I might escape Zeus' design.

PROMETHEUS. Zeus shall yet be humble, I swear, for all his stub-  
 born thinking, such is the marriage he is preparing, which will  
 throw him from his tyrant's throne into oblivion; and then the  
 curse of his father Cronus will at once be totally fulfilled, his 910  
 imprecation when expelled from his ancient seat. No god but I  
 could show Zeus clearly how to avert such struggles: I know all  
 this, and the means. So, now let him sit there in high confidence, 915



trusting to his battering thunder high in the sky and brandishing in hand his bolt of blasting fire—for these will avail him nothing against an ignominious fall into a collapse past bearing: so strong a rival in the ring is he now making ready against his own self, portentous and quite invincible, one who will invent a flame more powerful than lightning, and a mighty crash surpassing thunder, and a disturbance in the sea to make the earth shudder, one to splinter Poseidon's three-tined spear. When he dashes on this evil reef he will learn how far apart ruling and slavery are!

CHORUS. You are of course reviling Zeus with what you desire for him!

PROMETHEUS. With exactly what will be fulfilled—but I am saying too what I wish.

CHORUS. And should we expect that someone will master Zeus?

PROMETHEUS. Yes, and Zeus will have struggles even more crippling than these!

CHORUS. How can you throw out such words without fear?

PROMETHEUS. Why on earth should I be afraid? I am not fated to die!

CHORUS. But Zeus might contrive an ordeal for you still more painful than this!

PROMETHEUS. Well, let him do that, then! I expect everything.

CHORUS. Those who humble themselves before Nemesis are wise.

PROMETHEUS. Go on, pay your honours, make your prayers, give your flattery to one whose power is for the moment! I care less than nothing for Zeus. Let him act, let him use his power for this short time as he wants: he will not rule the gods for long.

But now I see Zeus' runner here, the new tyrant's servant; he has doubtless come to announce some fresh unpleasantness.

HERMES, *Zeus' messenger, enters from the side.*

HERMES. You, the clever one!—the one so extreme, too extreme for his own good!—the one who wrongs the gods by giving ephemeral men privileges!—the thief of fire—I mean you! Father Zeus commands you to declare what marriage you are vaunting, by which he is to be thrown from power. You are to tell this, moreover, with no riddling, but each detail as it is, and not, Prometheus, to impose

a double journey on myself. You see that Zeus does not grow soft 950  
before such threats as these.

PROMETHEUS. This speech is pompous talk, and full of arrogance, as suits a gods' servant! You are all new, new to power, and you think of course that you live in a citadel free of sorrow! 955  
Did I not see two tyrants expelled from it? The third I shall watch expelled is the one ruling now; it will happen most shamefully and most speedily. I don't seem to you, do I, to be at all afraid and cowering before the new gods? No, I'm far from that—together 960  
far from it! Now, you hurry back again on the road you came; for you'll learn nothing of what you're asking me.

HERMES. You were also obstinate like this before, and it brought you to anchor in these torments! 965

PROMETHEUS. I wouldn't change my poor success for your servitude, be quite certain!

HERMES. Better, I suppose, to be in servitude to this rock than to be father Zeus' trusty messenger!

PROMETHEUS. (*a line missing*)...it is a duty to return insult for insult like this. 970

HERMES. You seem to luxuriate in your present state!

PROMETHEUS. I luxuriate? I wish I might see my enemies in such luxury!—and I count you among them.

HERMES. Why—do you blame me too in some way for your disaster?

PROMETHEUS. In one simple word: I hate all the gods who came 975  
off well but maltreat me unjustly.

HERMES. I can hear the madness in you—it's no small illness!

PROMETHEUS. I'd happily be ill, if loathing one's enemies is being ill.

HERMES. You'd be intolerable, if you enjoyed success!

PROMETHEUS. Alas for me!

HERMES. That is a word Zeus does not know. 980

PROMETHEUS. Yet time as it ages teaches everything.

HERMES. And yet you still don't know how to be sensible yourself.

PROMETHEUS. No, for I would not be talking to you, servant that you are.

HERMES. It seems, you'll say no word of what father Zeus desires.

PROMETHEUS. And yet if I owed him gratitude, I'd pay it. 985

HERMES. Now there you're mocking me like a child.

PROMETHEUS. Why, aren't you a child, and even more silly than that, if you expect to learn anything from me? There is no torment or device by which Zeus will induce me to tell these things openly 990 until these torturing bonds are released. Therefore let him hurl his blazing flame, and embroil and confound everything in a feathery white snowstorm, and in thunderings in the earth: none of these will bend me into saying who is fated to throw him from his 995 tyranny.

HERMES. Now see if this proves helpful to you!

PROMETHEUS. I've seen very long ago, and resolved on it.

HERMES. You rash fool! Bring yourself, at last bring yourself to right thinking in the face of your agonies here. 1000

PROMETHEUS. You're bothering me uselessly; it's like advising a sea-wave! Never let it enter your head that my mind will weaken in womanly fear of Zeus' intention, and that I shall implore this Zeus I greatly loathe to free me from these bonds with palms upturned like a woman: I'm far from all of that! 1005

HERMES. If I speak I shall be saying much to no purpose, it seems; for you don't soften or relent at all under my entreaties, but like a colt new to harness you gnash the bit and fight violently against the reins. You are too headstrong, however, when your stratagem is 1010 weak. Obduracy in one whose thinking is unsound has less than no strength on its own. Consider, though, if you are not to be persuaded by words of mine, the kind of storm and huge wave of disaster which will inescapably overtake you. First, father Zeus 1015 will tear this jagged ravine apart with thunder and fiery lightning, and bury you bodily, and arms of rock will embrace you. When you have completed a long duration of time, you will come back 1020 again into the light; and Zeus' winged hound, I tell you, a tawny eagle, will tear greedily at the great rag of your body, an uninvited banqueter approaching every day, and will feast from your liver blackened with its gnawing. Do not expect any end to such an 1025 ordeal until some god appears to succeed to your miseries, and is willing to enter Hades where there is no ray of light, and to go among Tartarus' gloomy depths.

Deliberate accordingly, because what I assert is no fabrication 1030  
 but spoken all too surely; Zeus' lips do not know untruthful speech,  
 and their every word is fulfilled. Look about you, and ponder, and  
 do not think obduracy better at any time than sound deliberation. 1035

CHORUS. To us, Hermes seems to speak not wide of the mark, for  
 he orders you to abandon your obduracy and to search for good  
 and wise counsel. Be persuaded! It is shameful for one who is wise  
 to go badly wrong.

*All three voices now turn to chanting.*

PROMETHEUS. I knew, of course, this message he urged on me; 1040  
 but there is nothing unseemly in an enemy suffering badly from  
 enemies.  
 And so let the double fiery flare be hurled against me,  
 and the heaven be convulsed by thunder and wild winds' fury; 1045  
 and may their blast shake the earth  
 from its foundations, roots and all,  
 and an ocean-wave's surging tumult  
 block the orbits of the heavenly stars.  
 May Zeus hurl me down bodily sheer into dark Tartarus 1050  
 in cruel spirals of compulsion—  
 killing me will be wholly beyond him.

HERMES. (*to the CHORUS*) Exactly the kinds of resolve and  
 speech  
 one may hear from those with stricken minds! 1055  
 Where does his prayer fail to hit  
 the wrong note? Where ease back from madness?  
 Well, as for yourselves,  
 who sympathize with his agonies,  
 at least go quickly away somewhere from this place, 1060  
 so that the thunder's merciless bellowing  
 does not stupefy your senses.

CHORUS. Make some other speech, and exhort me  
 only with what will actually persuade me:  
 the word you slipped in there is quite intolerable. 1065  
 How can you order me to practise cowardice?  
 With Prometheus here I am willing to suffer what must be;

I have learned to hate traitors,  
and there is no plague I abominate more. 1070

HERMES. (*beginning to leave*) Well, at least remember what I do  
predict,  
and don't blame fortune when you are hunted down by ruin;  
nor ever say that Zeus threw you  
into unforeseen disaster— 1075  
no, do not say that, for you have thrown your own selves;  
knowingly, and not suddenly or unawares,  
you have entangled yourselves  
in ruin's inescapable net through folly.

HERMES *leaves*; the CHORUS *remain as the cataclysm noisily begins*.

PROMETHEUS. Look now! Here is the reality, no longer mere  
words: the earth is shaking; 1080  
its depths echo the bellowing  
of thunder; branches of lightning flash out pure fire;  
whirlwinds spiral with dust;  
blasts from all the winds leap wildly about, 1085  
mutual discord displayed as they blow in opposition;  
and the heaven is confounded with the ocean.  
Such a storm hurled against me by Zeus  
creates terror as it comes—too clearly! 1090  
O my most holy mother,  
O heaven revolving the light common to all,  
do you see how unjustly I suffer?

*The play is over. The CHORUS remain immobile round*  
PROMETHEUS. *The noise of the cataclysm ends.*

1062 *marriage to an evil man*: cf. 394 and e.g. 9–10, 37, 332.

1064–7 *set Io free*: 571–9. The play ends by recalling the suppliants' chief claim upon Argos through their ancestress. *checking...healing hand...kindness*: of the same incident, PB 848–9.

1068 *grant women victory*: if, or when, war comes (1044), reversing the Herald's prayer for 'the men' (951 and n.). The line echoes the Chorus' 524–31, 643–6.

1069–73 *better part*: euphemistic, as in English, i.e. 'the bigger', defined in the Greek idiom as *two parts out of three*, also euphemistic and almost certainly also a folk-saying, as at e.g. Pindar, *Pythians* 3.80 ff. The Chorus mean, the residual third, namely the smaller 'good': escape from the marriage will be better for them than the 'larger' *Evil*, namely subjection to men. *justice to follow justice*: just victory to follow just rejection of marriage [but this is only one emendation of the corrupt MS, which West leaves obelized]. *release devised by god*: the concluding two stanzas, and particularly this line, again trail the tense issues of the following play, *The Egyptians*: see 966–1073 n. above and Introd. 2.3 p. xxxvii. Cf. the heavily anticipatory final lines of *Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers*.

## PROMETHEUS BOUND

THE medieval manuscripts offer a *hypothesis* ('introduction') written at their date partly in the style of Aristophanes of Byzantium (see on *Persians*, p. 130), but to a larger scale: 'Prometheus is in Scythia, in bonds because of his theft of fire. Io learns from him (*words missing*) in her wanderings, and that as a result of Zeus' touch she will give birth to Epaphus. Hermes is brought on to threaten Prometheus with lightning unless he says what the future destines for Zeus. At the end amid thunder Prometheus is lost to sight. The story occurs incidentally in Sophocles' *Women of Colchis*, but is wholly absent from Euripides. The scene of the play is set in Scythia in the mountains of Caucasus. The chorus is composed of the daughters of Oceanus, who are nymphs. The main issue is Prometheus' being put in bonds.' There follows a list of the characters.

The summary of content omits Oceanus' attempt to intervene (ll. 276–396); only something short is lost from the sentence about Io, perhaps 'how many lands she will visit' (so West). Io's story (561–886 and n.) provides background for Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* (15–19, etc.; see Introd. 2.3 p. xlii). Sophocles' *Women of Colchis* is a very fragmentary play, said to have dramatized Medea's help to Jason in recovering the Golden Fleece from the mythical land of Colchis; its date is unknown.

For the play's theatrical aspects, see the Introd. 2.4 Appendix, p. lii.

1 *s.d.*: *near the sea*: see 573, where Io seems to have come from a shore.

1–87 Prologue, first scene. Prometheus is fettered to the ravine-face by Hephaestus, who is overseen by Power (77); it is Zeus' punishment for his theft of fire from heaven to give to mortal man (7–11). Hephaestus works reluctantly (12–20, 39, 45, 51), while Power is merciless (36, 42, 78).

Power and Force are personified abstractions, a type of figure infrequent upon the tragic stage, if frequent on the comic. We may compare the ogre Death who comes to fetch Alcestis at the start of Euripides' mythic tragicomedy (name play), but there is nothing of the fairy tale about our opening scene. Power's mute companion, his near-namesake Force, compounds this effect, for both were no doubt costumed impressively (for Power see 78). Prometheus stays silent until he is abandoned in his fetters (after 87).

The scene contains stichomythia in the rare form of alternating single lines from Hephaestus and couplets from Power (36–81: see Introd. 3.2 p. lxi). The inequality may express a contrast between the former's weakness and the latter's dominance.

2 *Scythia*: loosely the area of the modern Ukraine and eastward round the Black Sea; cf. 417–19, *Seven* 728; see Map 5.

4 *father Zeus*: just 'father' in the Greek, as his adherents call him: 17, 40, 53, etc., 947, 984, etc.

5 *harness*: the metaphor also at 618; see Introd. 2.4 p. xlix.

10 *rule*: the Greek noun *tyrannis* expresses absolutism, and became pejorative, our 'tyranny'. It is not so here, nor in 310, probably (Oceanus, cf. his 324, Greek 'monarch'); at 49 and 958 Zeus simply 'rules'; but Prometheus uses *tyrann-* frequently, perhaps pejoratively at 222, 224, 305, 357 (cf. Io at 761), certainly so at 736, 756, 909, 942, 957, 996. For tyranny in the play, see Introd. 2.4 p. xlviii and n. 44.

18 *Son of Themis right in her counsel*: a contrast of her prudence with her son's arrogance. Her name personifies 'right, ordinance, law' (Greek *the-*, the abstract form of it occurring at *Supp.* 39, 332). She knows the future, so that she indeed 'counsels rightly': 209–11, 873–4 and nn. *over-lofty in your designs*: dangerously ambitious and defiant, so that his punishment is appropriately 'lofty' too. Here even the sympathetic Hephaestus recognizes the fault in Prometheus' high intelligence; cf. Oceanus at 328, and 308, who marks Prometheus' arrogance at 318–20.

24–5 *night's starry cloak*: cf. *Seven* 400–1 (on a decorated shield); a clear night, therefore, leading to *dawn frost*.

27 *the one who is to alleviate it is not yet born*: but he will be: Heracles, alluded to in 871–3, 1026–9 (n.).

30 *beyond what was just*: similarly Prometheus' help to men is described at 507 with 'unduly'; Hephaestus may mean no more than 'against the natural distinction between god and man', and not that defiance of Zeus' rule is objectively criminal (although Power regards it so, 5, 9, etc.).

31–2 *guard*: bleakly ironic allusion to the way a guard must stand on watch, often immobile. Prometheus speaks of himself as a guard at 143.

35 *every ruler new to power is harsh*: 96 and n.

38 *prerogative*: as 82, 107, 229, 439; cf. 'privileges' in 30, 946.

39 *Kinship... powerful*: a cliché: Oceanus at 290, Prometheus at 347, 635–6, cf. *Seven* 1031. *comradeship*: through their association with fire, 7–8. The two gods shared cult and ritual at Athens.

45 *the worth of my hands*: as metal-smith, 366–7; cf. 619.

55–77 Hephaestus moves down from Prometheus' shoulders to his feet when shackling and even (64–8) transfixing him. Sonorous and varied vocabulary suggest sustained violence.

62 *for all his cleverness*: cf. Hermes' abuse at 944, 1011—and Prometheus' sad comment on himself at 470–1. The Greek word here gives us our 'sophist(ry)'; in Aeschylus' life time it was still acquiring a pejorative implication, changing from mere 'wisdom' or 'cleverness'. Power repeats this mockery at 85–7 (n.).

65 *right through his chest*: literally, it would seem. Since Prometheus is immortal (753, 933, 1052), he could withstand such violence; later he is to endure repeated laceration of his entrails (1022–3).

73 *urge... on loudly*: this verb, also 277, 393, 1041, expresses any forceful command; it is a metaphor from a huntsman shouting on his hounds.

76–7 *cross-fetters*: some translate 'pierced fetters', i.e. with holes for driving spikes through; either sense suits the bonds put round his legs in 74.

78 *voice's tone matches your appearance*: they both convey violence (cf. 42); Power's theatrical costume, perhaps an exaggerated bodysuit, and mask would suggest his cruelty.



82–4 *gods' prerogatives*: fire chiefly is meant (7–9, cf. 38 and n.) and its companion metal-working (500–2), rather than e.g. divination (447–54, 484–99); but there is allusion also to Prometheus' attempt to cheat Zeus of the meat in divine sacrifice, Hesiod, *Theogony* 521–616: see 493–9 n. and Introd. 2.4 p. xliii. *What ... can mortal men make lighter for you?*: see the Chorus at 546–7. *make lighter*: lit. 'bail out, drain away', metaphor from a ship's bilge, used as 'endure to the dregs' at 375.

85–6 *Prometheus, but the name is false, etc.*: it etymologizes as 'man of foreknowledge or foresight', as is spelled out in 86 [where *foresight* is an editor's correction of MSS 'one with foresight', i.e. Prometheus' name without a 'capital P']; a similar nameplay in 506. For *false* in such nameplay, cf. 717, and for the whole, frequent phenomenon e.g. *Seven* 576–8 and n.

88–126 Prologue, second scene. Prometheus is left alone, to endless torment. He speaks and chants in despairing protest (88–100), quickly sobers into speech again as his foreknowledge reminds him that he cannot escape (101–13), and then briefly sings astonishment as his senses herald an unexpected visitor (114–19) before once more chanting his misery and alarm (120–7). This quick alternation of theatrical voices conveys Prometheus' immediate confusion; it has no certain parallel in surviving Tragedy, but Io later moves from chanting to singing within her entry monody (562–608 n.).

88–90 *O sky divine, etc.*: the regular Tragic idiom, in which despairing appeal is made to nature's elements to witness disaster (Prometheus again at 1091–3), here acquires ironic truth: they are Prometheus' only company. In the Greek the effect is enhanced by alliteration on the letters 'p' and 't'—as again in 98–100. *waves' bright laughter*: glittering, an effect of light not sound: so the earth laughs under glinting weaponry, first in Homer, *Iliad* 19.362. The phrase *beyond counting* is forceful: it is figuratively apt for *waves*.

93–4 *look upon ... See*: the language used in calling upon legal witnesses; cf. the crag witnessing a fatal leap at *Supp.* 797–8.

96 *new captain*: ruthless, therefore (35, 149, 310, etc.).

100 *limit for my agonies*: cf. 183, 257, 755, 1026.

101 *I have accurate foreknowledge*: from his mother Themis, 209–11, cf. 873–4; she told him also that superior powers (i.e. Zeus) could be overcome only by guile, not force (212–13): hence his 'theft' in 110.

109 *fennel-stalk*: its dry pith would smoulder, permitting fire to be carried.

112–13 *wrongdoings*: sardonic; contrast Power at 9, even the Chorus at 260—and Prometheus himself at 266: Introd. 2.4 p. xlvii. *under the open sky*: cf. 15 ‘ravine beaten by storms’, 22–5. Line 113 (*under...fast*) has just three words in the Greek, a powerfully sounding conclusion to the speech; this effect occurs in mid-speech at e.g. 711, 799.

114–26 *s.d.*: *an imminent arrival*: the Chorus of Oceanus’ daughters begin their entry. They are ‘flying’ (128–30); however this entry was managed in the theatre (see Introd. 2.4 Appendix, p. lii), their initial invisibility (115, 123–4) to the immobile Prometheus is plausible.

116–17 *god, or...men*: The Oceanids possess divine ‘winged’ transport like their father (287), but in other respects behave like shy (134) but sympathetic girls (160–3, etc.). [*someone*: without this supplement, there is no personal subject to the sentence, only the ‘sound’ or ‘scent’ of 115.]

118 *to view my misery*: like a theatre spectator, an allusion used similarly at LB 246; see below, on 299–302.

119 *See me in bonds, etc.*: Prometheus’ first words set the tone of his continuous resentment.

126 *All that approaches*: ambiguous; both persons and the future itself (272) may be meant.

127–92. Entry of the Chorus (*parodos*); for realization in the theatre, see Introd. 2.4 Appendix p. lii. A remarkable aspect of the entry is that the Chorus only sing, without dance, for only at 278 do they dismount: see Taplin, *Stagecraft* 252–60.

The Chorus explain their coming rather improbably: deep in their caverns where their father Oceanus’ stream bounds the earth (139–40) they heard the echo of Hephaestus’ hammering (133–4); but the picture may derive from Thetis and the Nereids hearing from the depths of the sea her son Achilles’ loud grief for Patroclus, Homer, *Iliad* 18.35 ff. More important is the Oceanids’ motive, which their father will share: friendly sympathy for Prometheus (128, 144–6, etc.; cf. Oceanus at 289, 295–7, etc.); and Io’s accidental encounter with him prompts her sympathy too, for she suffers from gods as well, fettered metaphorically to pain (588–9), as he is literally (cf. 561–886 n., Introd. 2.4 p. xlix).

This *parodos* is not a continuous song by the chorus as found in all six authentic Aeschylean plays. They sing two pairs of responding stanzas, with each stanza answered by Prometheus with chanted anapaests: their surprise and emotion are countered by his more controlled self-pity (on the Greek lyric metre of 128–35 = 144–51 see 397–435 n., at end). Prometheus,

however, quickly begins a theme which provides him with confident resistance to Zeus, and dominates much of the play: his eventual release is as predestined as his bonds, for he has foreknowledge which will secure it for him from Zeus (85–6 n.).

128 *formation*: a naval or military term, perhaps apt to a tightly organized entry by the Chorus. *as friends*: like their father Oceanus (290). The Oceanids helped celebrate Prometheus' wedding (556–60).

133–5 *shocked me out of my shy reserve*: they are like ordinary unmarried Athenian girls, socially 'invisible' and wholly dependent on their legal guardian (cf. e.g. *Supp.* 204–5 and 391 n.); for their *caves*, cf. 300–1.

138–40 *Tethys of the many children and . . . Oceanus*: primeval parents of gods and powers, Homer, *Iliad*. 14.201; and esp. of river-deities and nymphs (Hesiod, *Theogony* 337–70 advances the number 3,000 for the nymphs alone); for Tethys and rivers, see also *Seven* 311. *coils round all the earth*: a picture formed from the experience of oceans apparently limitless to West and East, and from 'geography' which imagined the earth almost as a floating dish.

143 *unenviable guard*: cf. Hephaestus at 31.

148 *wither*: as 269; at *LB* 296 a polluted outlaw must starve and then 'mummify'.

149–51 *Olympus' helm*: see *Seven* 2 and n. for the metaphor. *laws . . . without due base*: emphatic paradox; Zeus' autocracy without 'constitutional' sanction recurs at 403, cf. 187, 324. *what was mighty before*: Zeus' own father Cronus (185, cf. 907–12), and then the Titans, overthrown, and with the Titan Prometheus' help (201–21).

152–4 *down . . . into boundless Tartarus*: at play-end Prometheus will repeat this wish, inviting Zeus' cataclysm to send him even that deep, 1051; cf. Hermes at 1027–9.

159 *for my enemies' delight*: the idea is continued in 160–1; cf. *Supp.* 1008 and n.

163–7 *rancorous*: a god's vindictive anger, e.g. Hera's against Io at 602. *unbending in purpose*: 34, 185, *Supp.* 385–6, etc. *the race of Ouranos*: father of Cronus (149–51 n.). *by some ruse, etc.*: the Greek word covers both cunning and force. *the rule . . . hard to attain*: over the gods.

168–71 *the blessed ones*: *Seven* 97, *Supp.* 524, etc. *president*: the word for an appointed officer at Athens (also *Supp.* 371)—but Zeus is an absolute ruler, 10 n. *new plan*: the adjective is 'sinister' (cf. 'fresh' in 150). The poet begins

here upon Prometheus' secret knowledge how Zeus may fall (cf. 188–9); it is through his own design, a marriage which Prometheus knows will recoil on him: 511–25, 761–5, 907–12 and nn., *Intro.* 2.4 p. xlvii.

173 *cower*: as he had not before punishment, 29, and will not again, 960.

183–5 *come ashore*: i.e. in safety, the idea semi-metaphorical at *Supp.* 337; to uncertainty, 438 there. Alternative translation: 'wherever in this pain ... and see its end'. *inexorable heart*: cf. 164.

187–9 *keeps justice to himself*: see on 150. *in this way*: a loose back-reference to 170–1, it appears. *smashed*: a surprisingly strong verb; it is used of Zeus' own intention against men at 236.

191–2 *bond of friendship*: echoing a Homeric expression, *Iliad* 7.302. Cf. 169.

193–396 First episode. In its first scene (193–276) Prometheus' preceding words on Zeus' harsh injustice to him but destined reconciliation lead the Chorus to ask why Zeus punished him as he did. In a long speech (198–241), then dialogue (242–62) and a shorter speech (263–76), he explains the theft of fire and why his punishment is so severe. The Chorus seek to learn more (277–83, lyric interlude), only for their father Oceanus to enter abruptly and make the episode's second scene (286–396); it is unconnected with the first, except through the motif of sympathy; Oceanus does not mention his daughters, and they are silent throughout. Oceanus offers the help due from kin to kin (289–97); he will try to intercede with Zeus, but Prometheus repels him, saying that Zeus is inflexible and citing his similarly harsh retaliation upon Atlas and Typhon, Titans like himself (his long speech 340–77 answers that of Oceanus 307–29). In a brief *stichomythia*, Prometheus mixes concern for Oceanus, that he should not share Zeus' displeasure, with a sharp dismissal (378–96). In this episode the poet is beginning to characterize Prometheus with the obduracy which dismays all who may sympathize with him, including at play-end the Chorus (1036–7); the term becomes frequent: 436 n., *Intro.* 2.4 p. xlvii.

Like his daughters the Chorus before him, Oceanus does not enter speaking: he chants, they sang; and the next entrant, Io, will chant before singing (561 ff.).

196–8 *even to speak ... pain*: Prometheus repeats his 106–7; but the Chorus' *you are hurt* in 196 makes the words ambiguous of physical pain as well; cf. 238, 261.

199–205 *divine powers...angry...faction*: from mutual jealousy, Hesiod, *Theogony* 617–38. *Titans, children of Heaven and Earth*: *Theogony* 644.

209–11 *my mother Themis and Earth, one form with many names*: one or more divine identities fuse; such syncretism, poetic or pragmatic for worship, is a marked feature of Greek religion (cf. 516 n.). Here the poet wishes to impress Prometheus' pedigree upon the Chorus (and the audience); as Earth, his mother bore all manner of creatures (*LB* 127); as Themis, she owned, and passed to him, prophetic powers (211, 873–4, cf. esp. *Eum.* 2–4, where she is Earth's daughter and once controlled Delphi and its oracle). Accordingly he can foretell the future (604–7, 622–30, 824–6) and pass skill in divination to men (484, etc.).

217–21 *join my mother...to aid...Zeus*: she is already his ally at Hesiod, *Theogony* 901 ff. *through my counsels*: at *Theogony* 624–8 it is Earth (see 209–10 n.) who advises Zeus in his triumph over violent strength. *Tartarus conceal...Cronus*: when deposed by Zeus; cf. Homer, *Iliad* 8.479–80 (where Prometheus is said to be in Tartarus, and will indeed go in our play, 1029, 1050).

223 *reward*: grim irony; the Greek word, like a synonym at *Pers.* 823, *Seven* 1021, can also mean 'punishment' (and in the chief MS it has been replaced by a gloss with this meaning).

230 *assigned...prerogatives*: the poet follows Hesiod, *Theogony* 73–4.

231–6 *mortals...obliterate their whole race*: probably a loose reference to the myth of the Ages of Man in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, successively destroyed by Zeus. *set men free, etc.*: also loose, for if the poet is following Hesiod for the fifth, last and worst Age, that of Iron, as that to which Prometheus gave fire (*Works and Days* 49–52), Hesiod says only that Zeus will destroy it (180), not that Prometheus thwarted him (235).

237–43 *bent...brought...into line*: grimly said: the 'bending' of Prometheus in his fetters (306, 513, cf. 995) does not 'bring him into line' in the sense of correcting him; the second Greek verb carries also the sense 'given this shape'. *not...getting (pity)*: cf. Power's jibe at 68. *ruthlessly*: 240–1 answers the Chorus' 194–5 explicitly; with their *share resentment* in 243 they repeat 162 (cf. Prometheus himself at 303).

246–60 This brief stichomythia serves to lift Prometheus' benefits to men clear of his offences to Zeus and punishment, which dominate the episode after the Chorus' request at 193–5; cf. 273–5.

246 *friends*: 128.

248–50 *from foreseeing their death*: this ‘benefit’ (251) is said at Plato, *Gorgias* 523d to have been given at Zeus’ own prompting. *blind hopes*: possibly an allusion to Zeus’ gift of Pandora’s jar, in which only hope remained once she released all the evils, Hesiod, *Works and Days* 96 ff.; cf. Introd. 2.4. p. xliii. Hope is seldom presented favourably in early Greek thought, e.g. ‘empty hopes’ *Pers.* 804, *Supp.* 96.

253–4 *ephemeral men*: 82–4 n. *learn . . . crafts*: 110, 477, etc.

257 *no end set*: cf. Prometheus himself at 100, 755.

259 *What hope is there?*: do the Chorus here see any hope for Prometheus as ‘blind’ (250)? At 509 they have ‘good hopes’ for him.

263 *with his feet out of harm’s way*: an everyday expression, *LB* 697.

265–6 *Everything of this I knew*: in advance, he said at 101. *I did wrong willingly*: repudiating the Chorus’ oblique criticism at 260–1. The doubling of *willingly* nears pathos, evident in the doubling of ‘let me persuade you’ in 274. It is possible, but no more, that the wording reflects the paradox attributed to Socrates, ‘No one does wrong willingly’.

269 *withering away*: the Chorus’ words at 147.

272 *step down*: from their winged ‘carriages’, 279–80; see 127–92 n.

274 *Let me persuade you*: reversed at 1039, when the Chorus plead with Prometheus.

275–6 *for misery . . . now upon another*: hinting to the Chorus that even they may suffer from a tyranny like that of Zeus [*for* is West’s conjecture (although he does not print it), and makes the best connection between the two clauses; the MSS are unsatisfactory].

278 *with light step*: self-referential, a decorative adjective for a nymph; cf. 125 ‘light beat of wings’.

284 *s.d.*: Oceanus’ entry is as abrupt as Io’s at 561. He rides a griffin, a four-legged ‘bird’, 395 (n.), a creature also employed by Zeus (802–4 and n.); for the staging, see Introd. 2.4 Appendix p. lii. Prometheus does not voice surprise until 298, and speaks as if he had not heard Oceanus’ first words, which suggests that Oceanus is still out of his view (cf. the Chorus at 114–26). The text does not reveal whether Oceanus dismounts at all, and at 396 he leaves as abruptly as he came.

284–396 Oceanus' arrival pre-empts Prometheus' narrative promised to the Chorus (272–3, 282). He comes, like his daughters, in true sympathy and friendship (289, 297); as Prometheus' former helper (331) he will try to help again, to seek mercy from Zeus (312–13, 325–6, 338–9, 381–5). Prometheus will have none of it (333–5, 340–4, 383–92); he is as resentful of his own punishment as of Zeus' cruelty to his cousins Atlas and Typhon (346–72).

290 *kinship*: Oceanus is a half-brother of Prometheus (559–60), and his daughters the Chorus are relatives by marriage too (558); cf. 'friends', 128, 246. Cf. Hephaestus at 14 and 39 (n.).

299–302 *view... observe*: verbs with overtones, the first suggestive of viewing by a privileged few (as at a mystery-cult), the second connoting either official visitation or theatrical spectating—as Prometheus anticipated at 119(n.); 'look at the sight' in 304 may have the same allusion. *stream named for you*: remote Ocean, bounding the world, 140; for the *caverns*, see 137. *land that mothers iron*: Scythia (2): 714–15, *Seven* 728 (n.).

308 *ingenious*: the Greek word has a pejorative tone: cf. 328 'extreme intelligence'. Oceanus hopes that this very cleverness nevertheless recognizes there is room for help.

309 *Learn to know yourself!*: slightly varied in implication from the famous Delphic maxim 'Know thyself'.

310 *new... new*: juxtaposed in the Greek for effect. Oceanus repeats Hephaestus' warning of 35.

312 *Zeus... seated... higher*: in the sky; of the gods generally, *Supp.* 597.

314–17 *child's play*: a surprisingly rare metaphor, whereas *old-fashioned*, i.e. 'an old fool', is quite common.

318–19 *tongue too lofty*: cf. 327, 360; 'over-lofty' also in Hephaestus' criticism at 18. Cf. the Chorus at 180, and their 'yield not at all' in 179.

323–4 *kick against the pricks*: this maxim also at *Ag.* 1624. *monarch*: see 10 n. *answerable*: an expression from Athenian public life: *Pers.* 213 and n.

328–9 *extreme intelligence*: 308 and n.

331 *you have shared everything courageously with me*: translation disputed; besides, Prometheus claimed sole opposition to Zeus at 234 [therefore the line is suspect to editors, and often emended (e.g. to 'when you have not had the courage to share everything with me'), or deleted].

333 *Zeus... not easily persuaded*: 164 and n.

336 *Facts, not words*: a contrast so common in all registers of language that it becomes trite, not always accurately employed: Oceanus may mean, the sight of Prometheus' fetters is stronger evidence of his folly even than his words; but in Prometheus' immobility, his words are the only reality.

339 *release from this ordeal*: Oceanus repeats his 316, 326.

342–3 *effort... no help, etc.*: as Power told Prometheus, 44. The triple repetition of 'effort' seems clumsy to us, but the Greek verb has the same root as 'ordeal' in 339, and Prometheus may be intending a rhetorical play.

344 *No, stay quiet*: hurling Oceanus' own advice back at him: 327.

346 *harm as few as possible*: the apparent implication, for the Greek expression jars awkwardly, lit. 'I would not wish harm to as many as possible'; but perhaps it simply negates what Prometheus may be expected to wish, that as many others as possible suffer like himself.

347–50 *my brother Atlas*: like Prometheus' half-brother Typhon (351–72: n.), and like Prometheus himself, punished by Zeus with tortured immobility. *supporting... earth's and heaven's pillar*: imprecise, as in 429–30, for in myth and art Atlas supports only the heaven, because he stands on the earth (these lines are based upon Hesiod, *Theogony* 517–18); at Homer, *Odyssey* 1.52–4 he 'has' the pillar; at Herodotus 4.184.4 he is himself the pillar (in the form of Atlas the mountain). So the picture here may be of Atlas seeming to join heaven as the pillar's capital to earth as its base. *not easy for the arms*: when they are flexed to hold in place what the neck and shoulders bear. [Minor MSS give 347–72 to Oceanus, which is not impossible ('brother' in 347 can be accommodated), but much less apt for the sympathies towards like sufferers: 331.]

351–72 *Typhon* (354, 370) who opposed Zeus (358) is blasted and crushed with a brutality which Prometheus' own punishment will reproduce (1015–19); he is 'buried' like Zeus' other foes (219–20, cf. 151). The author paints Typhon's agonies with vivid relish and resonance, very much in Aeschylus' style (see below); he draws many details from Hesiod, *Theogony* 820 ff. and Pindar, *Pythians* 1.15–28.

351–4 *child of earth*: primeval, *monstrous*, like Io's watcher the many-eyed Argos (568, 677–9; cf. *Supp.* 303); so Typhon sprang from, and lived in, *caves*. [*stood against all the gods*: metrically corrupt in the MSS and not yet emended, but the general sense is certain.]



355–7 *hissing terror... flashed a fierce gleam*: for the imagery, cf. the mixture of terrifying sights and sounds marking the shields and their bearers in *Seven*, e.g. Typhon at 493–6, 511, cf. 385, 537. *intent on the violent ruin*: again cf. *Seven* 427, 467.

359–60 *lightning which descends*: the Greek evokes this idea through Zeus' cult-title 'Descender'. *lofty boastings*: again cf. *Seven*, e.g. 551, 794.

361 *to the very soul of his being*: see n. on 881 'inside me'.

363–72 *sea-narrows*: the modern Straits of Messina. *crushed*: the Greek word is very rare, and derives here probably from Pindar, *Olympians* 4.7–8, who describes this same retaliation by Zeus upon Typhon. *Hephaestus*: the still active volcano Etna was imagined as the fire-god's forge. Hephaestus fetters *Typhon* like Prometheus, but with fire; the already incinerated but likewise immortal Typhon, buried beneath Etna, nevertheless spews out his rage in lava.

373–6 *save yourself as you know how*: a bitter reference to 330–1. *endure... to the dregs*: for the image, see 34 n. *until Zeus, etc.* 257–8, cf. 27.

377–93 This brief exchange, some of it in tense stichomythia (Intro.3.2 p. lx), shows Prometheus so contemptuous of help (383, 392) that Oceanus feels dismissed (387, 393). It exposes Prometheus' extreme resentment and self-pity even more than his last speech to the Chorus at 263–76.

377–8 *temper*: the Greek word (80) has the same ambiguity as the English. *sick*: for this nearly 'dead' metaphor, cf. 384, 685, 698, 977–8; cf. Intro. 2.4 p. xlix.

379–80 *softens... reduce swollen*: medical vocabulary; cf. 473–5 and n.

389 *newly seated, etc.*: he is harsh in consequence, 35, 310–14, etc.

394–6 *bird-like steed*: lit. 'four-limbed bird', the griffin, 286 n. The strange emphasis on the creature's impatience to leave may be intended to herald a further demonstrative theatrical effect, reversing Oceanus' sudden entry at 284: see n. there.

397–435 First choral ode; it is very brief, like the other two (526–60, 887–906: see Intro. 2.4 p. 1). The Chorus briefly renew their sympathy, decorate it by listing the peoples outside Greece who share it, and end by adding to these the sea and rivers; these natural elements are the ones they know best, as the daughters of Oceanus, 133–40. Zeus' arrogant rule (402–5) and his 'fettering' of Atlas (425–30, already cited by Prometheus at 347–50) illuminate what the

world 'laments'; the Greek word-root 'lament pervades the ode (397 = 435 in 'ring-composition'; 407, 409, 413, 432). Poetic colour is attempted briefly with the Amazons (415–16) and the high-castled warlike 'Arabs' (420–4); these brief images may anticipate the much more detailed and vivid geographies of Io's wanderings (707–852); for their geographical imprecision, see *Intro.* 2.4 p. xlviii and n. 45. [For the problematic text of 425–35, see n. on 425–30.]

The Greek ionic metre of the first pair of stanzas (397–414) repeats that of the first pair of the *parodos* (128–35 = 144–51), and is normally associated with solemn or ritual themes (see n. on *Pers.* 65); but, as in 128–51, such tones are absent here.

398–401 *lament... tears... in their wet flow*: typical redundancy in emphatic statements of sorrow; the Chorus' true sympathy shows when they share Prometheus' destruction, 1064–70.

402–5 *unsparingly*: translation insecure. The Greek word means usually 'unenviable (as at *Supp.* 642), unenvying'; the nuance here is perhaps 'showing no envious regard for any other', because of his absolute power. *with private laws and those former gods*: for both phrases see 150–1 and n.

406–10 *The whole earth*: but only Asia is meant (413), where Prometheus is fettered. Its peoples catalogued in 411–24 as sympathetic to Prometheus were legendary for their hard ferocity. *your magnificence... ancient*: while he was Zeus' ally, 216–23 [loss of text is shown by defective metrical correspondence with 400; West suggests 'now smashed', others '(lament)... with tears']. *your blood-kin*: Atlas and Typhon, 347–72.

411–13 *inhabiting homes settled*: the redundancy is in the Greek, but has no point, unlike the repetition of 'lament' (397–435 n.). *sacred Asia*: the adjective often honours major natural phenomena, e.g. a mountain at *Pers.* 49, rivers at 434, 812 below and *Pers.* 497, etc.

415–19 *maidens fearless in battle*: the Amazons, whom Prometheus will name in his prophecies of Io's wanderings (723–8), again as near *Maeotis' lake* (73: see Map 5).

420–4 *Arabia*: the name stands loosely for 'the East', like 'Ethiopia' in *Supp.* 286; editors cite Plautus, *Trinummus* 933–4 'A: ...on our way to the Black Sea we sailed to Arabia.' B: 'Hey, is Arabia actually on the Black Sea?' *flower, its warriors*: metaphor as *Pers.* 59, etc. *Caucasus*: the whole area around the modern Sea of Azov, not our Georgia; the play's ancient 'hypothesis' (p. 238) locates Prometheus himself in the Caucasus, but at 719 he speaks of it as distant from him. *roar*: as Tydeus roars at the prospect of battle, *Seven* 378.

425–30 [*supports...like a covering roof*: only the probable meaning of an apparent conjecture in a single late MS, adopted by West: the older MSS have ‘groans beneath’. The words *who* and *earth* appear to be certain supplements. The text of the final lines, 425–35, is damaged or defective, and not all editors have formed them into a pair of stanzas. Some editors believe them to be so irreparably damaged, and the sufferings of Atlas to interrupt the concentration upon sympathy for Prometheus so severely, that they resort to deletion, either leaving 425–30 as an ‘epode’, or removing 425–35 entirely.]

436–525 Second Episode. Prometheus narrates his services to mankind, in two long speeches, interrupted but not deflected by the Chorus’ puzzled observation that his inventiveness could not save himself (471–5 between 436–70 and 476–506). This topic resumes the earlier anxieties of the Chorus (e.g. 181–5, 262) and of Oceanus (e.g. 295, 315–16), and occupies the episode’s end, in a short exchange (507–25); and it continues in the ode 526–60: see n.

Prometheus’ benefits to men (the term occurs at 251, 501, 613): in the fifth century BC theories of human progress not only began but multiplied and varied. They moved away from earlier attributions of man’s whole condition to the gift of gods (or their punishment: Hesiod, *Works and Days* 109–211, the successively worsening ‘Ages of Man’); through conceptions of advance as initiated by gods but developed by men; to rationalization of conditions and progress as man’s own achievement. Prometheus in this play favours mankind (11, 28, etc.); as well as removing their foreknowledge of death, and imbuing them with hope, his chief gift is of fire, the element which ‘teaches’ (110) men how to ‘learn’ (254) practical and technological skills, once he has enabled their intelligence (443–4). Through this last, they master other ‘skills’ (477, 506) to which he ‘shows them the way’ (498): the natural calendar, number, writing, animal husbandry, ships, medicine, and divination (454–99; see too the nn. on 459–61, 462–6, 467–8). Fifth-century Tragedy contains two other striking accounts of human progress: Sophocles, *Antigone* 332–75, a ‘hymn to man’s pure inventiveness’ (c.440 BC, very close to the *Prometheus* in date), and Euripides, *Suppliants* 201–15, man’s advance from bestial chaos to orderly communication (late 420s). Excellent summary discussions by Griffith in his edition (1982), 166–8 and Podlecki (2005), 116–27; earlier e.g. Conacher (1980), 82–97.

436–7 *I keep silent, etc.*: Prometheus has necessarily been silent during the Chorus’ ode, but a longer silence seems implied here, which he fears the Chorus will interpret wrongly. Probably the actor stayed silent until the Chorus moved towards him. *obduracy*: of Prometheus at 907, 964, 1012, 1034, 1037.

439–40 *prerogatives for these new gods*: see n. on 230.

448–9 *like dream-shapes*: i.e. ineffectually; the idea also at 549.

452 *scurrying*: the Greek adjective is lit. ‘light as air’.

455–6 *fruitful summer*: the period for taking any ripe crop, including our autumn.

458 *the risings... of the stars*: possibly an echo of Ag. 7, a verse of disputed authenticity.

459–61 *Number*: an invention commonly associated with the human Palamedes, e.g. in the now lost nameplays by Sophocles and Euripides. *letters*: also attributed to Palamedes; Euripides, *Palamedes* fr. 582 has them as ‘remedy’ against forgetfulness: cf. *record of all things* here. *mother and crafter of poetry*: ‘Crafter’ was a cult-title of Athena, a patroness of both arts and crafts (Sophocles fr. 844); for ‘mother’ in metaphor, cf. 301 (the earth, of iron), *Pers.* 614 (the grape, of wine).

462–6 *yoking, etc.*: of beasts for heavy work (464), while *horses* were for the rich, to ride or to pull carriages or chariots (465–6). *yoke-loops*: attached to the T-bar across the animals’ shoulders (*Pers.* 191–2). *chariot... luxury*: for the link, cf. *Pers.* 607–8. The domestic use of such vehicles was condemned as un-Athenian, e.g. at Demosthenes 42.24. [*saddles* is an emendation of MSS ‘bodies’, as in ‘take over with their bodies from men’.]

467–8 *ships*: Prometheus’ son was Deucalion, who built the first ‘ark’ to escape the flood. For ships as men’s own invention see Sophocles, *Antigone* 334–7.

473–5 *you cannot discover... cure yourself*: ‘Physician, heal thyself.’ The Greek is phrased so as to emphasize ‘cure’, thus resuming the entire simile in 473–4. Oceanus had made the same bleak comment (335–6). Here, Prometheus ignores the Chorus’ thrust, and immediately states his mastery of real medicine (478–83): dramatist’s irony?

484–99 *many ways of divination*: a remarkably detailed exposition: why? Probably because Prometheus himself heard and learned prophecy from his mother Themis (209–11 n.) and relies on her confident prediction of his ultimate release (873–4). Also, he will prophesy to Io her future, tormented wanderings (604–8, etc.).

485–6 *judged from dreams what must be reality*: alluding probably to the famous Homeric picture of false and true dreams, *Odyssey* 19.547, 20.90.

486–92 *omens from people's remarks*: unconsidered or involuntary revelations ('people's' is not in the Greek). *signs met on their journeys*: in Aeschylus, famously Zeus' eagles sent to encourage Agamemnon at Aulis, Ag. 111–59. *birds of prey...perchings together*: suggestive or determinative analogies for human behaviour: see the meaning of the simile *Supp.* 223–8(n.).

493–9 *entrails, etc.*: from their shape and colour, and afterwards the manner of their burning. There is comparable detail in a sacrifice narrated at Euripides, *Electra* 827–9. *thigh-bones...in fat*: Prometheus presents favourably what Hesiod, *Theogony* 535–57 portrayed as his deception of Zeus, and a cause of Zeus' anger: men sacrificing treated the animal's bones in this way, but kept the flesh for themselves; the story became a comfortable explanation of a puzzling ritual (cf. 82–4 n. and Introd. 2.4. p. xliii).

500–4 *silver and gold*: the formulaic, precious pair are distinguished from the utilitarian other metals as early as Homer, *Iliad* 6.48.

505–6 *all their skills from Prometheus!*: a very pointed ending, with a play on his own name like the cruel one by Power in 85–6 (n.).

507–10 *unduly*: see n. on 30. *hopes that you will yet be freed*: matching their father Oceanus' confidence, 338–9. *and be no less strong than Zeus*: the poet is making the Chorus build a lot on what they have heard from Prometheus at 168–9 (n.).

513 *bent like this*: 237 n.

515–21 A very brief stichomythia ends this episode, as it did the last (377–93 n.), expressing once again Prometheus' obduracy.

515 *the helm of the inevitable*: a variation on the image of 149 (n.).

516 *Fates and...Furies*: overlapping identities (cf. 209–11 n. on Themis-Earth); they are identical at *Seven* 1055, sisters at *Eum.* 961. They are often associated in their working (esp. in accursed families *Seven* 975, *LB* 910–11), because retribution from the Furies is fated and inevitable; Prometheus is emphasizing Zeus' helplessness against inevitability, 518. *ever-mindful*: borrowed from references to their relentlessness at Ag. 155, *Eum.* 383. *three*: a canonical number for supernatural beings, e.g. the Phorcides at 795; cf. Geryon's three bodies at Ag. 870. The alliteration on 'f' in this line follows that of the Greek.

519 *Zeus except to rule...?*: cf. 757.

520 *You'll learn nothing further, etc.*: Prometheus clings to his secret knowledge (168–76; cf. 377–8 and n.), even to friends—but see 769 ff. (to Io) and 907 ff. (to the Chorus again).

526–60 Second choral ode. The first pair of stanzas (526–44) states the insuperable power of Zeus: the Chorus fear it for themselves, Prometheus suffers for his lack of fear. The second pair (545–60) develops this concern, in more human and intimate terms: men cannot return Prometheus' favours with help against Zeus; and in their sympathy the Chorus recall their closeness to him at his wedding.

The deeper emotion thus suddenly expressed may aim to prepare for the pathos of the following episode with Io (561–886 and n.); but the Greek metre of this ode is associated particularly with hymnic or celebratory verse (see n. on *Pers.* 532–97), and seems appropriate only in the first pair of stanzas; see however on the metre of both the first ode (397–435) and the third (887–906).

530–1 *feasts where oxen are killed*: special and extravagant gestures of honour: *Supp.* 706, *LB* 261. *Oceanus' unquenchable stream*: 'unsleeping' at 139.

534 *I wish this remains firm*: never to offend Zeus, 526–33.

541 [Defective metrical responsion alone reveals the loss of words; the sense is complete, so that supplementation would be mere guesswork.]

542 *no fear of Zeus*: so Prometheus himself at 174, 960.

543–7 *regard...for...men...is too high*: cf. Power at 11. *What aid...from ephemeral men?*: Power at 84.

549–50 *dream-like*: see on 449. *blindness*: from which Prometheus claimed to have rescued them (447).

552 *ordered government*: lit. 'harmony', imposed by Zeus' mind (526) which it is impossible to escape, 907, *Supp.* 1049.

557–60 *wedding-hymn beside bath and bed*: in ritual procedures, as the bride bathed before she left her father's house (e.g. Euripides, *Medea* 1026–7, *Phoenician Women* 348) and as the bridal pair entered the bedroom (e.g. *Ag.* 707). *led in*: as the groom taking the bride to her new home. *Hesione*: in early myth Prometheus has no wife, or she is named as Pyrrha.

561–886 Third Episode: Io's story and her importance to Prometheus; on this difficult episode, see *Introd.* 2.4 p. xlv. Io is the third visitor for Prometheus, both unexpected and with an unexpected link to him; he knows her story and her future (589–92, 609–12, 617, etc.) and they bear on his own (see

below). Daughter of Inachus king of Argos, she caught Zeus' roving eye (654), but the jealousy of Zeus' wife Hera drove her from home, partly transformed into a cow, harried jointly by a maddening cattle-fly and a constant watcher, the many-eyed Argos (673–9); in the play, her actor wore a head-mask with a cow's horns (588: cf. n., and *Intro.* 2.5 p. lv.) Her frenzied flight takes her round much of N. Greece, our Balkans, S. Russia, the Caucasus, and the nearer Middle East to Egypt: see Map 5. Her story is told in less detail in *Suppliants* (274–325, 538–89, cf. 15–19, 40–8).

She has supernatural motion and speed, and mountains and waters are no obstacle (e.g. 722, 729–34). So her passing through these mountains is at least explicable; Prometheus at first only hints her importance to him (at 611 she is a 'friend'), but he has foreknowledge that one of her distant descendants will free him from his bonds (771–4)—and his prophecy of this ends the episode (869–73), at last satisfying the Chorus' anxiety to know this detail (785, 821–2, cf. 259, 521).

Much of the episode is filled out with long narratives by Io of her past (640–86) and by Prometheus of her future (700–41, 786–818, 823–76). After his prophecy the episode ends as abruptly as it begins, with Io's renewed seizure by her frenzy, which in 877–86 carries her violently away; as soon as she enters, it seizes her in a short paroxysm of pain and bitterness. Her entry-monody (566–608) conveys this cruel torment much more vividly than her own narrative; the monody moves in mid-sentence (573–4) from free lyric into a pair of long responding stanzas, all written in very irregular rhythms; the two stanzas are capped each by spoken lines from Prometheus (566–88 + 589–603 = 593–608 + 609–12). In the second stanza Io's language, if not the rhythm, is more calm; this prepares for her questioning of Prometheus, in only slightly irregular stichomythic dialogue (613–30, and later 742–79). In their second exchange, after he tells her of her future wanderings (700–41), she is able to check her dismay sufficiently to ask him about his own release. (This monody is unique in the complete plays attributed to Aeschylus: we do not know whether Aeschylus himself ever used the form.) The skilled deployment of varying formal resources creates outward dramatic order for a remarkable episode.

561 *Whom do I see, should I say, etc.*: to know his name, in order to address him effectually with her appeal of 604–8; Prometheus anticipates her own name, 589–90, cf. 593. Cf. Prometheus' own apprehension of the unseen Chorus at 114–26.

563 *storm-beaten*: partly literal (cf. 22–5, 113), primarily metaphorical: 1015, cf. 838 of Io herself.

564 *For what crime, etc.*: Io repeats her question at 620; cf. Prometheus' own 112.

568–72 *that cowerd . . . passed from the dead below*: at 680–1 Io relates how Argos, the watcher set over her by Hera, was killed by the god Hermes (cf. *Supp.* 305 and n.); is she hallucinating in her frenzy, and taking the gadfly to be Argos tormenting her from Hades? If so, the reed-pipe he plays in 574–5 is part of her hallucination. *cunning in his look*: probably alluding to Argos' ability to keep at least some of his *countless eyes* (678–9) open at all times [but some editors are unhappy, and read 'with his eyes at a slant': he sees without looking 'straight'].

573 *in hunger*: cf. 598–9, endlessly seeking new grazing; cf. *Supp.* 539–42. *over the sand by the sea*: taken to indicate the setting of the play near the sea: see s.d. on 1, and 713 below.

574–5 *wax-bound reed-pipe*: the pastoral 'Pan-pipes', the syrinx, of reeds set together and waxed to a frame. For music warding off sleep see *Ag.* 16–17 [but *to destroy my sleep* is a conjecture adopted by West instead of the converse 'to give me sleep']: Io's torment is sleepless wandering, Prometheus' is sleepless immobility (32).

579 *yoke . . . under . . . torments*: a yoke is not inappropriate for Io transformed into a heifer, but the metaphor is often 'dead'; at 108 it is partly alive for Prometheus' 'bonds', cf. *Introd.* 2.4. p. xlix.

580 *derange*: a torture of the Furies, *Eum.* 329.

582–3 *Burn me, etc.*: death-wishes are frequent in Tragic extremity: Io again at 747–51, cf. *Supp.* 787–806. *sea-creatures*: ultimate terrors, *LB* 587–8. *devour*: an ugly word in Greek, used of Thyestes' eating his children's flesh, *Ag.* 1597.

588 *horned like a cow*: also 674. Later art depicted her thus (like Isis in Egyptian cult: Herodotus 2.41.2), earlier art showed her completely transformed (perhaps implied by *Supp.* 299–301).

589 *Inachus' daughter*: see 705.

591–2 *Hera*: 600, 704, 900; for her vindictive torment of Io, see *Supp.* 290–309, 562–4, 586–7. *weariness . . . course*: the metaphor from athletic training is fuller here than in 586.

595 *Who are you, etc.*: Io knows very well who Prometheus is, for at 605 she asks for his prophecy. Perhaps the author is continuing her initial disoriented surprise (561 ff.).



598 *wastes me away*: from hunger (573); the Furies too harry their victims into starved debility, *Eum.* 139, 267. Prometheus also is to ‘wither’, 147, 269.

599–601 *wild bucking*: like the heifer she partly is; also 675. *headlong speed*: this detail also at *Supp.* 547. *rancorous*... [*Hera*]: see on 591–2 [the name is supplied from the ancient commentary; defective metre reveals its loss].

604–8 *tell me clearly... if you know*: Io asked in 593–7 how he knew her name, and now guesses his prophetic knowledge too.

610–11 *riddles... plain words*: the author likes this contrast: 949, cf. 775, 833. Here it marks the change from Io’s wild singing to measured dialogue, and heralds the emphasis on facts and clarity in this episode (Io at 605 and 640–1, both she and Prometheus throughout 613–27), avoiding the enigmas invariably associated with prophecy (cf. Cassandra at *Ag.* 1183). *friends*: Prometheus has never met Io but at once acknowledges sympathy from a fellow-victim of Zeus.

613–30 A quickly moving stichomythic exchange in which Io successfully presses Prometheus to reveal her future, as she has just asked, 604–8.

613 *O you who appeared, etc.*: Io’s first spoken words are suddenly elevated in tone; ‘appear’ often registers a divine or extraordinary manifestation, e.g. 1028, *Pers.* 354, 666. *mankind’s common benefactor*: unlike so many gods who help only individuals.

622–3 *Well... will be*: such double-line interruptions to stichomythia often accompany a sudden new tone or topic.

631–4 *No, not yet!, etc.*: a further, dramatically motivated postponement of Prometheus’ prophecies; cf. 282, where Oceanus’ entry interrupted them.

635–6 *It’s your job*: an everyday expression, colloquial. *your father’s sisters*: Io’s father Inachus (590) was held, as a river-god, to be descended from Oceanus the father of the Chorus (140).

649–54 *Zeus has been inflamed, etc.*: as Prometheus knew, 590. *Lerna’s deep meadow*: well-watered, 677; it was to be the setting for Zeus’ attraction to her (*Supp.* 539–42, cf. 43). Meadows, grassy and flowery, often have erotic connotations, as do the eyes (*Zeus*’ here), e.g. Helen’s eyes at *Ag.* 742.

655–7 *dreams... every night... dreams... in the night*: repetition uncomfortable to us (and cf. 645 already), but the author is emphasizing that Io’s (eventual) fate was the inescapable if forewarned will of gods; for such dreams see *Intro.* 2.1 p. xxvi n. 14.

658 *Pytho*: the oracle at Delphi, which in some accounts Apollo had taken over after killing its guardian ‘snake’ (cf. ‘python’), whence his title ‘Pythian’, *Seven* 748, etc. Ancient folk-etymology explained the name from the rotting (Greek *pyth-*) of the dead snake, *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 372–4; modern philology is baffled. *Dodona*: in upland W. mainland Greece, roughly N. of Delphi. The oracle of Zeus there (also 830) was famous and believed to be the oldest in use (Herodotus 2.52.2, cf. *Hom. Od.* 14.327–8).

666–8 *let loose to wander*: anticipating her transformation into the heifer: animals were often turned loose, for a god to accept as sacrifice or not: cf. *Supp.* 691 and n. *should he not be willing, etc.*: such threatening tones occur in Apollo’s oracle to Orestes about the matricide, *LB* 269–74, etc., *Eum.* 465–7. Like Inachus here (699), Orestes was ‘persuaded’ by the oracle, *LB* 297–8, *Eum.* 84. *Zeus*: Io here attributes both the threats to her father and her own suffering wholly to Zeus himself.

669–72 *Loxias*: for this name of Apollo, see *Seven* 618 and n. *against my will, and his will too*: for this verbal conceit, cf. 19, *Supp.* 227, etc. *Zeus’ curb compelled*: cf. the metaphor from forcible harnessing used for Agamemnon’s surrender to Artemis in sacrificing Iphigenia at Aulis, *Ag.* 218 ‘put on the yoke-strap of compulsion’.

676 *Cerchne*: an area W. of Argos.

677–9 *born from the earth*: cf. 351, and 209–11 n. *clustered eyes*: 568 and n.

680–2 *sudden death*: see 570 n. *god’s scourge*: *Seven* 608; a Homerism, e.g. *Iliad* 12.27 (Zeus). [The MS text in 680 *sudden* is unmetrical, but easily corrected. West however leaves it obelized.]

684–6 *don’t... out of pity... vice*: recalling Prometheus’ promise at 610.

687–95 Brief, passionate lyrics from the Chorus divide Io’s pathetic narrative (640–86) from Prometheus’ long forecasts of her future suffering (696–876); this separating device is used repeatedly in *Seven* 369–685 (see *Introd.* 3.3 p. lxii). [Unfortunately the Greek text and metre are insecure in 692–3 and left obelized by West; with *strike* in the translation of 692 I follow an editor’s emendation, approved but not printed by West, which is based upon comparable imagery from chariot-driving at *Eum.* 156–7.]

707–11 *turn yourself from here*: for the apparent course of Io’s wandering, see Map 5. Many of the place names seem inaccurate, for the author locates to the West of the Crimea and the Sea of Azov some places which are East or South of it, or not even on the Black Sea at all: see the n. on 420–4 [some editors have moved 717–28 to follow 791 to ease the problems]. *towards the*

*sun's rising*: for a Greek the Caucasus (719; also 420–4 n.) lay far to the N., so that Io must go both E. and S. *unploughed lands... the nomadic Scythians*: their life on *carts* is described with wonder by Herodotus 4.46.

713 *keep close to the... sea*: very confusing, but the author at least places Scythia to the N. of the Black Sea. Cf. 573 and n.

714–16 *the Chalybes, workers with iron*: 133, *Seven* 728 (n.). They are here moved far eastward from their traditional home on the S. shore of the Black Sea.

717 *Hybristes—not falsely named!*: i.e. the '(River) Outrager', defying or destroying would-be crossers; for such punning, see 85 and n. This river is cautiously identified on grounds of location and torrential character (720) with the Hypanis, which flowed into the N. Black Sea near the Cimmerian Bosphorus (730); the name Hybristes is similar in sound and may be an invention both to create the pun and to extend the idea of the 'uncivilized' Chalybes.

723–8 *Amazons*: located in Colchis in 415–16, approximately the same area as here. At *Supp.* 287–8 (n.) they are 'meat-eaters', and archers (like *Eum.* 628). *Themiscyra* and *Thermodon* were historically on the S. coast of the Black Sea. *Salmydessus*: the long and dangerous coastline of the S.-W. Black Sea; the author has again moved it to the S. coast and eastward. *stepmother evil*: 'evil' is not in the Greek, and has been added for clarity; this pejorative image of the stepmother was common to many cultures. *and very gladly*: as men-hating women (724, cf. *Supp.* 287) they are sympathetic to another woman ill-used by the male Zeus (Io's view: 671–2).

729–34 *the Cimmerian isthmus*: the Crimea; Lake *Maeotis* behind it (418) is the Sea of Azov. *Bosporus... called after your name*: the name Bosphorus was understood in antiquity, perhaps from this passage, as 'the crossing of the ox' (or 'cow', for Io is here the 'cow' or 'heifer'; modern scholars doubt the etymology (see n. on *Supp.* 543–5). The better-known Bosphorus was and is still at the entrance to the Black Sea (*Pers.* 746 and n.); in variations upon Io's myth she crosses into Asia at that point by swimming (*Supp.* 544–81), rather than at the Crimea; but it is not said here how she crosses the *Maeotic basin*.

735 *Europe... Asia*: the Greeks set Asia's beginning either at the E. Black Sea (as here, and e.g. Herodotus 4.45.2) or at the Turkish Bosphorus (*Pers.* 799, *Supp.* 547).

736–41 *weighed... down on her*: the verb suggests the image of the weighing scale, e.g. *Seven* 21, *Supp.* 405 [but it is an editor's alteration of MSS 'hurled

down']. A *cruel suitor*, etc.: the Greek appears to emphasize the cruelty with a harsh assonance in this sentence. The Greek adjective here translated as *cruel* often describes persons in whom their true nature comes out only later, e.g. 944 ('extreme' there), or the unexpectedly harsh recoil on them of their own actions, *Seven* 730; 941–5 and n. *prelude*: for this metaphor applied to suffering, cf. *Supp.* 830.

742 *Oh! ... No!*: these ejaculations stand here outside the verse-line; as such they are very rare and strongly dramatic, e.g. from Cassandra in sudden prophetic seizure at Ag. 1214 (950 below is not an example).

746 *sea ... of torment*: cf. Io's use of 'storm' at 643, Hermes' at 1015.

747–51 *What use for me to live then?*: for such death-wishes, see 582–3 n.

753 *not my destiny to die*: repeated at 933, cf. 1052.

756 *until Zeus is thrown*, etc.: Prometheus opens this outcome to Io as a further sympathetic visitor, just as he had to the Chorus (168 ff.); but here he gives details he earlier withheld.

757–79 Line 757 signals the ensuing stichomythia; it is long, initially interrogative, and then informative; it both frustrates Io and promises her the reassurance which at last follows in 823–76.

760 [*rejoice*: an editor's correction of 'learn (the facts)'].]

762 *His very own empty-headed designs*: revealed in the following lines; but 170 already alluded to them.

764–8 *such a marriage*: again at 907–10. *one who will bear a son mightier than his father*: Thetis, competed for by Zeus and Poseidon, to whom Prometheus' mother Themis made this prophecy (Pindar, *Isthmians* 3.26 ff., cf. 924–5 below). *wife*: see n. on 'partner' in 834.

771 *if Zeus is unwilling*: circular in logic, since Zeus will certainly not be willing (770), but Prometheus is sure (764 n.), so that Zeus' fall is certain unless ... ['while Zeus rules' has been conjectured, however].

772 *one of your descendants*: Heracles: see n. on 1026–9.

774 *third ... after ten others*: 'thirteen' is 'lucky' here, but less evidently for Aegisthus at Ag. 1605.

775 *prophecy*: Prometheus will reveal 'fate' (772); Io reacts as if to an enigmatic oracle replying to her questions; both the mention of her descendants and the number 'thirteen' (772, 774) baffle her, despite Prometheus' promise of clarity at 620 (n.).

776 *do not seek to learn*... *either*: rather like Prometheus' prevarication before (see on 757–79); but he quickly gives way (786 ff.), as he did earlier to Io after due warning (622–30: with 786 cf. 630).

790–2 *the flow bounding the continents*: the Cimmerian Bosphorus, 730 and (n.) 785 [*make your way*... *rising*: the MSS text has needed correction; some editors have supposed loss of text, or brought in 717–28 to follow 791].

792–800 *the Gorgon plains*... *the Phorcides*: Io will now enter a purely mythical area, inhabited by monstrous beings. *Phorcides*: also called the Graeae or 'Ancient Ones', *long-lived* like those other female horrors, the never-ageing 'maidens' the Furies (*Eum.* 68–9). They are named the Gorgons' guardians in Aeschylus' lost satyr-play *Phorcides* (frs. 261–2), in which Perseus stole their single eye and so eluded their watch, in order to kill the Gorgon Medusa; since her eyes turned men to stone (800 *no one who sees them, etc.*), he caught her look in his polished shield. *Cisthene*: a notional place here, proverbially a remote mountain; there were in fact historical places with this name. *three*: for the canonical number, see 516 n. *hair white as swans*: this is how most scholars understand the Greek, which is lit. '(maidens) swan-formed' and for which no explanation has been suggested; for *Phorcides* is from a word-root meaning 'white (haired)'. *neither sun nor moon, etc.*: another supernatural abnormality, for the Phorcides' one eye is for keeping watch, just as the Furies apparently see amid their constant darkness, *LB* 285; cf. the Cimmerians at Homer, *Odyssey* 11.14–19—whose territory Io passes here, 730. *snake-haired Gorgons*: Orestes uses this detail to evoke his hallucination by the Furies, *LB* 1048–50. The name *Gorgon* baffles etymologists, for it seems to be itself the root-form of many derivatives connoting something terrifying with its look, or to another's gaze; it may be formed from an inarticulate or child's name for such a horror.

801–4 *garrison*: translation disputed, for an ancient commentator understood the word here to mean 'place against which one must be on guard' [and some editors emend the word to give 'such is the prelude to what I tell you']. *sight*: the word is that of 118(n.). *griffins*: 286 n.; *unbarking hounds*: a 'kenning' like 'bird-like steed' at 395; cf. 'winged hound' of Zeus' eagle at 1022. Aeschylus fr. 422 apparently described a 'griffin-eagle', made in bronze on a shield; the word was mocked by Aristophanes, *Frogs* 927.

804–7 *one-eyed Arimasian horse-riders*: a fabulous people, probably made 'one-eyed' here to match the Phorcides of 794; *horse-riders* too may duplicate the nomadic Scythians of 709, and recall the Indians of *Supp.* 284. *Pluto*: a name invented to go with *golden*; it means 'Wealth(y)'. The underworld deity Pluto was so named, with euphemistic irony, as king of a featureless realm.

807–9 *black race, etc.*: the further south, the darker the skin, an age-old observation. Io's son Epaphus, to be born in Egypt, will have this colour, 851. *river Ethiops*: the Upper Nile is meant.

810–14 *Nile... pure flow*: good for drinking, fertile: *Supp.* 1024–9, *Pers.* 611 and nn. *revered*: for holy rivers, see e.g. *Pers.* 497. *Bybline*: another appropriated or imaginary name; the historical Egyptian Byblos was a town in the Nile valley. *far-distant colony*: 846–7. But some translate 'long-lived', for Io's line will be absent from Greece for many generations (cf. 774, 853–4); Io's mother is 'ancient' in *Supp.* 51.

816–17 *indistinctly*: lit. 'lispingly'. *doubling back*: probably a metaphor from the return-leg of a race (*Ag.* 344).

825–6 *I shall tell what she has endured, etc.*: true seers 'knew' the past, and such knowledge made their prophecy of the future credible (cf. 835); cf. the Chorus and Cassandra at *Ag.* 1199–201.

828 *very end*: Prometheus appears to mean the end of Io's wanderings in mainland Greece before she was driven round the Black Sea, as she herself told, 571–5 [but the phrase is suspect to editors after 'entire end' in 823].

829–35 *Molossian regions*: N. W. Greece (Epirus), and far from Io's home in Argos. For the oracle at *Dodona*, see 658 n. *Thesprotia* was a coastal area. *speaking oak-trees*: the oracle's priestesses interpreted the sounds of their moving branches or leaves. *by which you were told*: Prometheus repeats Io's own narrative from 658–9. *with no riddling*: again, cf. 610 (n.). *partner of Zeus*: the Greek word implies a 'lawful' wife, but this was Hera (*Supp.* 296, 1035); the oracle therefore meant that Io would be specially privileged by her union with him—as her dream had first told her (645–54). When Prometheus prophesied Zeus' disastrous union with Thetis at 764 (cf. 909), the Chorus used the same word 'wife' of her in 767.

835 *does anything... win your belief?*: 825–6 n.

836–41 *Rhea*: Zeus' mother. This gulf, the S. Adriatic, also bore his father Cronus' name, but why, is not known, unless myth gave it a part in Rhea's attempt to hide the infant Zeus from Cronus' assault, for his destruction by Zeus was prophesied (cf. 201–2). In making Io the eponym of the *Ionian sea* (the same S. Adriatic), the author is abusing tradition (the name came from the Ionian Greeks). The Cimmerian Bosphorus is named from Io's crossing (732–4 and n.).

844–5 *tell you and Io jointly*: cf. 784–5. Past narrative now returns to future, picking up 810–14, Io's arrival in Egypt; here she will bear Zeus' son Epaphus

(851 n.), from whom Prometheus' rescuer Heracles will descend (1026–9 n.); and this will answer the Chorus' questions too.

846–69 This account of how Io's descendants, the fifty daughters of Danaus, were pursued to Argos by their fifty suitors, the sons of Aegyptus, summarizes the action of *Suppliants*, except that there the women are promised help to avoid marriage by 'Pelasgus' land' (860 below); here they themselves act, murderously. See Introd. 2.2 p. xxxvii.

846–7 *Canopus*: Io's destination in Egypt also at *Supp.* 311. *Nile's...banked-up silt*: the Delta: *Supp.* 3 and n.

848–52 *touch of a...hand...named...[Epaphus]*: the etymological 'aetiology' of his name reproduces that of *Supp.* 15–18, 45–7 (n.), 313–15.

856–8 *hawks...doves*: this image for the suitors' 'hunt' appears too at *Supp.* 223–4 (n.).

860–3 *two-edged*: lit. 'twice-whetted', i.e. sharpened on both sides. [Not all editors suppose loss of text; but *will accept* is problematic because in *Suppliants* 'Pelasgus' land' accepts Io's descendants before any bloodshed. Accordingly, 'will be soaked' is conjectured in replacement.]

864–5 *I wish Aphrodite...my enemies*: Prometheus hopes for this outcome for Zeus from his bride (764–8 and n.). *one of the daughters*: Hypermnestra, who spared Lynceus (Introd. 2.2. p. xxxvii). This motif is found in another story of murderous brides, those of Lemnos (*LB* 631–4).

871–3 *one bold...with his bow*: Heracles (1026–9 n.). He gave his bow to his friend Philoctetes, and it was needed for the capture of Troy (see Sophocles' *Philoctetes*: the plays of Aeschylus and Euripides with this subject are both very fragmentary). [The Greek text is strained in expression, and a line may have been lost after *bold* in 871.]

873–4 *oracle...Themis*: see on 209–11.

877–86 These lines are a remarkable example of bodily self-description to supplement, indeed almost to replace, realistic 'acting'. Some of the vocabulary here is 'medical', but comparable evocations of madness are not rare in poetry; in Tragedy Eur. *Heracles* 931 ff. is notable, cf. 867–70. *Onward!*: an exhortation used in war, appropriate for a deranged person about to launch forward; but the ancient commentator says that here, as elsewhere, it expressed just distress [in some MSS the two exclamations are violently expanded]. *spear-point*: a very rare Greek noun, but suiting martial *Onward!* [its rarity induces most editors to retain MSS 'unfired' where West adopts the

conjecture *fiery*; then ‘unfired spearpoint’ is the gadfly’s sting, in yet another ‘kenning’ (e.g. 801–4 and n.). *inside me*: evades the literal translation ‘(kicking) my diaphragm’, of a suddenly thumping ‘heart’ (as in 361 ‘the very soul of his being’).

887–906 Third choral ode: a brief meditation on the perils of ‘marriage’ with partners, especially gods, who are incomparably greater. The Chorus even as nymphs fear it, Io as mortal woman suffers cruelly from it. The ode forces the myth to suit the world of the Athenian spectators: the terrible example of Zeus and Io (894–900, 906) illustrates awkwardly the everyday human truth (and Greek custom) that marriage among equals works best: the artisan should not aspire to wed above himself (890–3, 901); Io deserves the love of a man, not of a god (899). The Chorus’ sympathy for Io reminds them of Prometheus’ marriage (553–60); and the Greek metre of the stanza-pair here is repeated from that almost ‘hymnic’ ode (see 526–60 n.); the similar elevation of tone is conveyed also by the triadic form here, epodes (901–6) being regular in such hymns.

[The text of 894–906 has needed considerable correction by editors, mostly for metrical reasons; see esp. on 894–6.]

889 *Wise indeed, yes, wise*: the doubling is pointedly emphatic, and matched in the responding stanza at 894; cf. on 891–3.

892–3 *either made effete...or vaunting, etc.*: these two lines in the Greek are markedly similar in phrasing and sound, a further device aiming at solemnity; cf. 901–6 n.

894–6 *Fates*: dispensers of human destiny, *Eum.* 724—but also of divine, above 516. [*text missing*: revealed by metrical inequivalence with 888, where some editors therefore delete words; others supplement here, e.g. with ‘who bring all to fulfilment’, applied to the Fates in 511.]

897–900 *Io hating her husband*: Io is still a maiden, hating the ‘husband’ who desired her and brought her misery, Zeus (see her cry at 578–81); the Chorus pray to avoid that (906), for as nymphs they could expect divine suitors. *wandering, her ordeal from Hera*: 599–601, cf. 592; also *Supp.* 564.

901–6 *For me...Zeus’ design*: the Greek has marked assonances in 901 and 904, probably another effect like that of 891–3. *escape Zeus’ design*: cf. 552 (also the Chorus).

907–1093 Final scenes (*exodos*). Prometheus’ exchanges with Io, and revelation of their linked destinies, only increase his defiance of Zeus, voiced in a monologue and exchange with the Chorus (907–40): ‘Zeus will not rule the



gods for long, 940. Pat on cue comes Zeus' messenger Hermes, to demand Prometheus' secret knowledge of how Zeus is endangered by his planned marriage (947–8; cf. 168–71 n.); deliberately or not, this plays ironically upon the Chorus' deprecation of Zeus as marriage-partner (894–7). Hermes and Prometheus are contemptuous of each other's arrogance; Hermes matches Prometheus' threat to Zeus with Zeus' threat of even worse violence yet to come: lengthy imprisonment beneath a cataclysm of stone when Zeus' lightning destroys the ravine, and a return to the light only to be perpetually eaten alive by Zeus' eagle until some god takes Prometheus' place (1014–29; there is more irony here, for Hermes threatens only what Prometheus knows of his release, 871–3). Their fruitless, ever more divisive altercation is carried in a natural-feeling dialogue which varies single speeches and angry stichomythia (941–1035).

The Chorus echo the last advice of Hermes, for 'wise deliberation' (1038, from 1035), urging it one final time upon Prometheus, only for him to scorn absolutely the threatened cataclysm. This extreme defiance is marked by change from speech to chanting (from 1040), in which Hermes and the Chorus join as the god tries to detach them from Prometheus; Hermes fails, and he leaves (1054–79). The cataclysm begins, in which the Chorus share Prometheus' fate (1080–93). Mythology—or poetic invention—can be appropriately extreme too.

907–11 *Zeus shall yet... I swear*: the wording of 168, Prometheus' response to the Chorus' first incredulity about his fall. *the marriage*: enlarging on Prometheus' prophecy of 764 ff. (n.); the 'son' of this marriage (768) is described in 920–2 in more portentous terms. *curse of his father Cronus*: not otherwise known to myth. One senses here the author's imitation of the paternal curses of Oedipus (*Seven* 70, 723 ff.) or Thyestes (Ag. 1600).

913 *No god but I, etc.*: earlier at 440, 770.

916 (*Zeus'*) *thunder*: 923, 1062, 1081–2.

920–5 *strong... rival in the ring*: lit. 'wrestler', the image used of Cronus' fall to Zeus at Ag. 171. *portentous, etc.*: the wording here is very similar to that of Pindar, *Isthmians* 8.31–5a, where the prophecy is attributed to Themis: see 873–4. The colourful language of 922–4 seems to anticipate the descriptions of storm and earthquake in 992–4, 1015–19, 1043–9, 1080–90.

924–5 *disturbance*: lit. 'disease', i.e. an abnormality of nature, an earthquake created by Zeus' new 'rival' (920) in Poseidon's own realm *the sea* to destroy his power, of which his *three-tined spear* (or trident) was the emblem, 925

(*Supp.* 218, *Seven* 133); and Poseidon is Zeus' brother [but 'disease' is a remarkable metaphor, preserved by some editors like West only at the cost of emending the MSS in 925]. This vivid passage may owe much to Hesiod's account of Zeus overwhelming the Titans with lightning and storm, *Theogony* 687–710.

933 *I am not fated to die*: 753, 1052.

936 *Nemesis*: the Greek name here is *Adrasteia*, 'She from whom there is no running away'; Plato too uses it.

937 *Go on, pay your honours, etc.*: cf. Prometheus' abrupt dismissal of Oceanus' pragmatism at 391–2.

941 *runner*: derogatory; cf. Prometheus at 966 and Hermes' hurt pride in 986–7. *servant*: milder, cf. 954, 983.

944–6 *You...I mean you!*: aggressive, abusive, and semi-colloquial lines. Hermes' tone at once establishes his crude arrogance, with his pompous selfishness in 950–1. As Zeus' herald he is characterized as unfavourably as such human officers often are in Tragedy (and were no doubt felt to be in life); cf. the Egyptian herald at *Supp.* 882–953. *the clever one*: Power scorned Prometheus's 'cleverness' at 62. *extreme...for his own good*: cf. n. on 308, and on 739 'cruel'. *giving ephemeral men privileges*: 82–3. *thief of fire*: 7–8, cf. Prometheus himself at 109–10.

947–8 *what marriage, etc.*: Zeus and Hermes are well aware of this aspect of Prometheus' prophecies (764, 908–27).

949 *with no riddling*: the author repeats his 610 (n.).

955–6 *You are all new, new to power*: 35, 96, 149, etc. *citadel free of sorrow*: the imagined bliss of the gods, e.g. *Supp.* 524–5; the earliest such picture is at Homer, *Odyssey* 6.42–6.

957–9 *two tyrants expelled*: before Zeus, his father Cronus (195, 280, 911, Ag. 171, *Eum.* 641) and grandfather Ouranos (205, Ag. 158–9). *watch*: for the nuance of this verb see n. on 299 'view'. *most shamefully and most speedily*: the translation imitates the Greek rhythm and assonance, typical of a half-colloquial curse-formula.

960 *cowering*: the expected attitude of submission (Power at 29), already repudiated by Prometheus (174).

965 *anchor in these torments*: cf. the Chorus at 183.

968 *servitude to this rock*: cf. Hephaestus at 31.

971 *luxuriate*: cf. 436, and for the oxymoron, cf. perhaps *Supp.* 833.

975–6 *gods who came off well*: after Prometheus helped Zeus overcome Cronus, 218–20.

977–8 *the madness in you*: of hating the gods (976), but madder still is not *loathing one's enemies* (cf. 1041–2, and 970); the first may seem irreligious, not to do the second is against personal and public duty (cf. 1069). The tripling *illness...ill...ill* is rather contrived, although 'sickness' is a very common metaphor for any dangerous abnormality (see n. on 'disturbance', 924): see Introd. 2.4. p. xlix.

980 *Alas for me!*: momentary self-pity, emphasized by the very unusual division of a single verse-line in a stichomythia [some editors therefore isolate Prometheus' exclamation, and repeat it for Hermes before 'That is a word, etc.', in an effect like 971–2, or give 980–1 wholly to Prometheus].

985 *And yet if, etc.*: sarcasm in this line provokes 986; but the translation is not sure. Prometheus seems to confirm that he will say nothing (cf. 963), but the sarcasm may depend on a different meaning here, 'since I owe...'

989–91 *There is no torment...released*: so Prometheus as early as 173–5.

992–4 *his blazing flame...snowstorm...thunderings in the earth*: Zeus as master of destructive nature, 358–9, 563, 916, etc.; an anonymous god, *Pers.* 496. *feathery white snowstorm*: the literal translation: Herodotus 4.31.2 tells of 'feathers' in the Scythians' description of snowflakes; but our line may mean 'snowstorm on wings of white'. *embroil and confound*: a pairing from everyday speech, frequent in Aristophanes.

997–8 *Now see if, etc.*: normally a half-colloquial caution, here carrying malicious expectation, to which Prometheus replies knowingly.

1001–6 *like advising a sea-wave*: it is deaf and inflexible; a frequent image, like that of unyielding rock (242). *in womanly fear*: cf. Eteocles' condemnation at *Seven* 182–95, esp. 195.

1007–11 *like a colt new to harness...reins*: simile running into metaphor. For Prometheus 'harnessed' in his bonds, see 5, 618, etc., Introd. 2.4. p. xlix. *stratagem*: his silence; cf. 470. The Greek word echoes Hermes' 'You, the clever one' at 944.

1015 *huge wave*: lit. 'triple wave': *Seven* 760 and n.

1016–19 This threatened cataclysm begins at 1080. Prometheus will emerge from it into the light (1021), but still need a rescuer who will succeed to his miseries by entering the underworld (1028–9): this is Heracles (n. on 1026–9).

1020–5 *winged hound...eagle*: cf. 803 (griffin) and n. *tawny*: probably the meaning of the Greek adjective, for Aeschylus calls eagles ‘fiery-red’ in fr. 160; but the word can mean also ‘bloodthirsty’. *banqueter*: horrific application of human imagery to animal, not rare in bloody allusions, e.g. of the eagle’s feast at Ag. 138; cf. *Supp.* 801. *every day*: this translation seems forced by *approaching*, but some translate ‘all day long’, comparing Prometheus’ agony at Hesiod, *Theogony* 525. *blackened with its gnawing*: the dark of clotted blood, *Seven* 736, etc.

1026–9 *some god...to succeed*: a supposed impossibility intended as a final taunt; but Heracles, who was Zeus’ son and became a demi-god after his death, indeed went down to Hades. Our author seems to cast Heracles as Prometheus’ saviour, as one of his descendants (771–4); and Heracles was famous as an archer (872–3). In some accounts the centaur Chiron (half-man, half-horse, also a god’s son, and another benefactor of mankind) surrenders his immortality in favour of Prometheus: see *Introd.* 2.4 p. li n. 49, on the *Prometheus Unbound*. *Tartarus*: 219; ‘dark’ at 1051.

1031–3 *spoken all too surely*: ‘surely’ is not in the Greek, and this translation is therefore doubted [some editors emend to ‘all too true’]. *Zeus’ lips...fulfilled*: cf. *Eum.* 615–21, Apollo’s assertion that as Zeus’ prophet he may speak only the certain truth. For Zeus the ‘fulfiller’, cf. *Supp.* 524–6 (n.).

1034 *Look about you*: perhaps literal, perhaps loose for ‘consider widely’; cf. Prometheus advice to Oceanus at 334 ‘keep looking out for yourself’.

1036–9 *To us, Hermes seems, etc.*: the Chorus appear to sympathize with Hermes’ arguments as prudent, fearing further punishment for Prometheus, but at 1064–70 they reject his advice to themselves to abandon Prometheus as morally unthinkable (‘cowardice’, 1066).

1040–2 *nothing unseemly, etc.*: a rejoinder to the Chorus’ rebuke of his unrelenting animosity with ‘shameful’ (1039). *enemy suffering badly from enemies*: 977–8 (n.).

1043–9 *the double fiery flare*: Zeus’ lightning, 358–9, 917, sometimes pictured by artists and sculptors as a bolt flaming at both ends. *flare* is lit. ‘curl of

(long) hair', a metaphor for forked lightning; cf. 'branches' in 1083. *ocean-wave... block... the... stars*: the watery complement to the uprooted earth; cf. 1088 'heaven is confounded with ocean'; no doubt ancient sailors too told of such giant waves, if not as large as those now firmly attested for the world's oceans, not to speak of tsunamis which follow earthquakes. All the extreme phenomena of 1043–9, like those of 1016–19, begin in 1080–7.

1051–3 *cruel spirals*: lit. 'solid whirlpools'. The adjective is not rare metaphorically, the noun is used both literally and figuratively of disaster at *Eum.* 559. *compulsion*: the word often nears 'fate' in sense (cf. 105, 514–15, and n. on 673 'curb'). *killing me, etc.*: Prometheus is immortal: see 65 and n.

1054–62 *Exactly the... resolve, etc.*: Hermes tries to spare the Chorus from Prometheus' ruinous folly (1059, cf. 1067) in defiance of Zeus (1071–9).

1056 *hit the wrong note*: translation insecure, but probably a metaphor from music (and apt therefore to the *vow* of 1052). Although the Greek verb in 1055 'stricken minds' is different, a secondary wordplay may be intended.

1061 *bellowing*: metaphor from cattle, repeated at 1083.

1063–5 *what will actually persuade me*: to stand by Prometheus, not abandon him (*the word* of 1060, 'go quickly away somewhere'). *slipped in*: insecure translation of a metaphor seemingly from sweeping one thing along with others, in order to slip it past. Some take the image to be of things swept along incidentally, like flotsam on the main stream.

1069–70 *traitors*: the Chorus identify Hermes with the gods who betrayed Prometheus' help, 438–40. *abominate*: lit. 'spit from me', a vigorous, almost colloquial idiom, nevertheless at home in high poetry, e.g. *Ag.* 1192.

1073–9 *hunted down... entangled... net*: linked imagery; for *ruin's net*, cf. *Ag.* 360–1 ('Troy's, in Zeus' net); the ominous term 'ruin', often personified, e.g. *Pers.* 1007, *Seven* 957, is doubled here (1073, 1078), at start and end of Hermes' final threat. For *inescapable* (or 'with no way through') as the net's adjective in 1079, cf. *Ag.* 1382 (Clytemnestra snares Agamemnon in his robing).

1080 *s.d. noisily*: Prometheus cries out as the cataclysm begins. How the play's end was managed in the theatre is conjectural: see *Introd.* 2.4 Appendix pp. lii–liii.

1080–90 *Here is the reality*: Prometheus' description of the storm now all about him ends with this same emphasis, 1090 *too clearly*. Much of the

vocabulary for nature's upheaval here is repeated from Prometheus' defiance of Hermes in 1016–19 and 1043–9. It appeared in the Io-episode in metaphor for her frenzied suffering (n. on 563), and helps to link her fate with Prometheus' as victims of Zeus; note esp. *leap wildly about*, the image from an animal's 'bucking' used of Io's frenzied rushing at 599, 675.

1091–3 *most holy mother*: Themis, invoked here both as primeval diety and prophet (209–11 n.): 'can you tolerate this outrage to your son? will your foreknowledge not stand by me again?' *heaven revolving the light*: paraphrasing a conventional appeal to the Sun, who illuminates and witnesses all (91, cf. *Supp.* 213 for the Sun's powers of salvation); the Sun 'revolves' his chariot of light across the heaven. *how unjustly I suffer*: last at 976, first at 93.